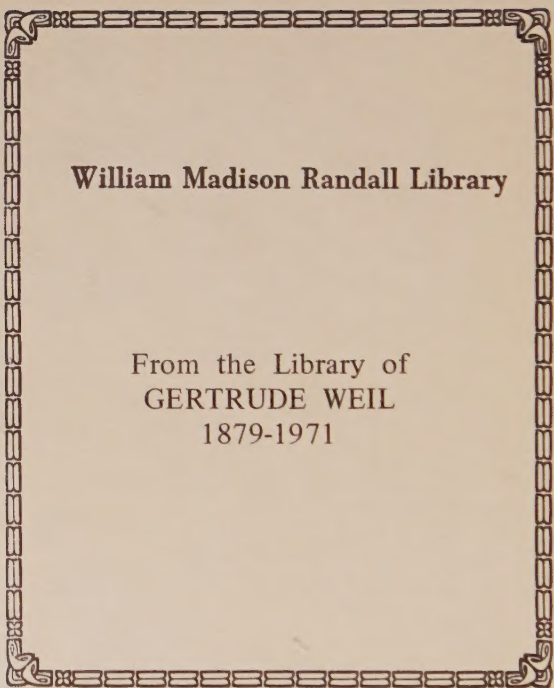


# IT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU

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Coningsby Dawson

A decorative rectangular border with a repeating geometric pattern of small squares and lines, with ornate corner pieces.

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**IT MIGHT  
HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU**

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

THE LITTLE HOUSE  
THE TEST OF SCARLET  
LIVING BAYONETS: A RECORD OF  
THE LAST PUSH  
OUT TO WIN: THE STORY OF  
AMERICA IN FRANCE  
THE GLORY OF THE TRENCHES  
CARRY ON: LETTERS IN WARTIME  
SLAVES OF FREEDOM  
THE RAFT  
THE GARDEN WITHOUT WALLS  
THE SEVENTH CHRISTMAS  
THE UNKNOWN COUNTRY  
THE ROAD TO AVALON  
FLORENCE ON A CERTAIN  
NIGHT  
THE WORKER AND OTHER  
POEMS

# IT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU

A CONTEMPORARY PORTRAIT  
OF  
CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

BY  
CONINGSBY DAWSON

NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY  
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MCMXXI



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IT MIGHT  
HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU





# IT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU

## CHAPTER I

### IT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU

You may feel inclined to dispute the assertion. You may even consider yourself insulted by the suggestion that it might have happened to you. "It could never have happened to me," you may argue. But it could.

You had no control over the selection of your parents or the date and place of your birth. The advantages which saved you from having it happen to you were the merest accidents; they did not arise from your own inherent merit. It was your good luck to be born in America. No protest of yours could have prevented your being born in Central Europe. So, had it not been for the fortune of your birth, it might have happened to you.

But perhaps you think that though you had been born in Central Europe, the horrors of in-

justice and famine, described in these pages, would not have been shared by you. You would have risen above them; you would have been too astute, too far-sighted, too resourceful to be entrapped by them. Whoever else had gone under, you by your superior capacity for industry would have dug yourself out on top.

You wouldn't. Industry, astuteness, far-sightedness, resourcefulness—none of these admirable qualities would have saved you. You must disabuse your mind of the prejudice that the starving peoples of the stricken countries are shiftless, unemployable, uncivilised, or in any way inferior to yourself. To tell the truth you are probably exactly the sort of person who, had you been born in Central Europe, would have gone to the bottom first. You belong to the middle or upper class. You are highly intelligent and specialised. You gain your living with your brains and not with your hands. If society were disrupted and temporarily bankrupt, so that the delicate mechanism of modern business ceased to function, your way of earning your living would no longer find a market. You would have to turn from working with your brains to working with your hands. Everyone in your class would be doing the same; there would not be enough manual

labour to go round. You might have made investments in the days of your prosperity; but in the face of national insolvency your former thrift would not avail you. Your investments would be so much worthless paper, totally unnegotiable. You might have hoarded actual cash, the way the peasants do in their stockings. Even this reserve would soon be exhausted since, by reason of the depreciation in the currency, it would take a hundred times more money to purchase any service or commodity than it used. In starving Central Europe it is the doctors, professors, engineers, artists, musicians, business men, lawyers—the intellectual wealth of the nations, who have been the first to perish. The further they had dug themselves out of the pit of crude manual labour, where all labour starts, the more precipitous was their descent.

But perhaps you think that though these things might have happened to you, you would not have deserved them—not in the sense that Central Europe deserves them. Had you been an Austrian your moral fineness would have revolted against your countrymen's war of opportunism and aggression. Perhaps! But men act in crowds and the probabilities are against you. All the enemy peoples with whom I have conversed, have claimed

as the ideals which urged them to fight precisely the same ideals for which we sacrificed and ultimately triumphed—liberty, justice, righteousness. Had their Governments not convinced them that their inheritance of freedom was in danger, they would not have risked their happiness in carnage. This at least is certain, whatever else is in doubt: the ordinary, home-loving citizen, whatever his nationality, only becomes a soldier and makes himself a target for shell-fire under the compulsion of a lofty motive. It was the bad fortune of the citizens of the Central Powers that their lofty motives were the offspring of lies—lies retailed to them as truth by the criminals and casuists who were their leaders. Had we been of their citizenship, should we have been more alert to discern the falsehood?

That I should write in this spirit, pleading for our late enemies, may cause a slight amazement in a public who have read my war-books. My reason—I will not say my excuse—is that I have visited our late enemies' need and in the presence of human agony animosity dies. One ceases to question how far their suffering is the outcome of their folly; his sole desperation is to bind up their wounds—especially the wounds of their children. When witnessing death and starvation on the whole-



sale scale now prevailing in Europe, he forgets his austere self-righteousness and substitutes mercy for justice. "It might have happened to me," he says; "these women might have been my wife, my mother, my sisters, and these children, save for the grace of God, might have been my children."

One never believes that his own calamities are possible until they have happened. He thinks of himself proudly, as an individual immune from the contagion of adversity. It was so that the Russian aristocrats thought of themselves. If in the summer of 1914 the stranger of *The Third Floor Back* had mysteriously appeared at the Imperial Court in Petrograd and had announced, "Unless you have compassion and share with the outcast, the day will come when there will not be a peasant in Russia as forlorn as you," he would have been laughed to scorn and sent into exile. Yet that day has come. In Warsaw you may see the princesses, the generals, the fops, the plutocrats, the law-givers of that resplendent Court, clothed in rags, their feet in sodden boots, waiting their turn in the bread-line. After such a sight, no reversal of fortunes, however far-fetched, seems impossible. It might happen to anybody. It might happen to me or you. There is even a likelihood that it will happen unless we learn to have compassion. Central Europe

will not die patiently of starvation indefinitely. Nations which civilisation has condemned to starve to death have nothing to lose by giving way to violence; they may have something to gain by it. The more desperate their need becomes, the more likely they are to risk the gamble. They would at least get the satisfaction before they perished of making other nations, which had been heedless of their misery, as outcast as themselves. There lies the danger.

So, however fanciful it may seem to say in writing of Central Europe, "It might have happened to you," there is a grim possibility about the final statement, "It may happen yet."

## CHAPTER II

### THESE MY LITTLE ONES

Today I visited one of the strategic points where the battle against hunger is being fought. It was a former barracks, now a soup-kitchen of the American Relief Administration, situated in the poorest district of Vienna, where meals are daily prepared for 8000 children. There are 340,000 undernourished children in Vienna—a total of 96 per cent. out of the entire child-population. But these, whom I visited, were all hand-picked and medically certified as being sufficiently near to extinction to be admitted. Funds are too low to feed any save those who are within measurable distance of dying.

The sight was a disgrace to civilization. The snow, which the bankrupt Government has no money to clear away, had turned to slush. One's well-shod feet were perishing. The road which approached the desolate banquet-hall, was an oozy quagmire of icy mud. Within the building at

wooden tables sat an army of stunted pigmies, raggedly clad and famished to a greenish pallor. They were the kind of pigmies to whom Christ would have referred, had He been with me, as "These, my little ones." They ranged in age all the way from the merest toddlers to the beginnings of adolescence. No one would have guessed the adolescent part of it, for there wasn't a child in the gathering who looked older than ten. They didn't talk. They didn't laugh. They were terribly intent, for each had a roll and a pannikin of cocoa over which it crouched with an animal eagerness. And the stench from the starveling bodies was nauseating.

The people who attended to their needs were Austrians. There are less than forty American officials in the whole of Europe to superintend the workings of the Relief Administration. The food had been provided one-third by American philanthropy, the other two-thirds by Austrians—which is an answer to those thrifty economists who are so afraid of pauperising Europe. This is the fixed rule of the American Relief Administration's activities, that it contributes one-third of the expense and does the organising, while the country assisted provides the other two-thirds and the personnel of the workers. When the country is able to function



for itself, as is the case with Czecho-Slovakia, the machinery remains but the Administration withdraws. Another useful fact to remember is that one American dollar, at the current rate of exchange, keeps one of these little skeletons alive for a month. And yet another fact is that the whole of each dollar donated is expended on food and nothing is deducted for organisation.

As I stood in that dingy hall and watched the overwhelming tragedy of spoliated childhood, my memory went back three years. The last time I had witnessed a misery so heart-breaking had been at Evian, where the trains entered France from Switzerland, repatriating the little French captives who had existed for three years behind the German lines. It had seemed to me then that those corpse-like, unsmiling victims of human hate had represented the foulest vehemence of the crime of war. Yet here today in Vienna, two years after our much prayed for peace, I have been confronted by the same crime against childhood, being enacted with a yet greater shamelessness, for the war is ended, four-fifths of the world has an excess of food and there is no longer any excuse of military necessity. Today our only possible excuse is hard-heartedness and besotted selfishness.

Here today, to all intents and purposes, are the

same little slaves of famine and ill-usage that were to be seen passing through Evian three years ago, the only difference is that their nationality has changed. Those were French and these are Austrians. "Poetic justice! Retribution!" someone may say. To such a man I would reply that the war was not waged against children. The children of whatsoever nations we fought never ceased to be our friends.

And these children whom I saw today, most of them were not born when the war started. They had no voice in our animosities. They did not ask to be brought into such a world. Many of them since their first breath, have never known what it was to be warm and not to be hungry. To them joy is a word utterly meaningless. They have always been too weak to laugh or play. Two years after our madness has ended they are still paying the price of the adult world's folly. We have returned home to our comfortable firesides, but their tender bodies still shudder in the trenches which an unwisdom, which was partly ours, dug for them.

I entered a shed where little feet were being measured for the Christmas gift of boots which had arrived from America. What feet! How deformed with cold, and swollen and blue! They

had never been anything else since their owners could remember. There was nothing childish about them, except that they were small. Some were wholly naked; some were wrapped in rags; some were thrust into the recovered derelicts of splendid adults like myself. My feet were like stones with trudging through the melting snow, but I could look forward to a time when mine would be warm. What about theirs, the feet of little children whose pain was never ended—small feet that should have learned to dance?

On a bench sat a tiny boy, wizened and jaded as an old man. He was being fitted. A little ragged girl who was no relation, but was acting mother to him, told me his age. He was nine, but he was not as big as seven. No, he wasn't being fed by the Americans—not yet. He wasn't famished enough; there were other children who were worse. There wasn't enough food to feed you unless you were very bad. Perhaps he would be bad enough soon after Christmas.

I didn't dare to tell her that after Christmas, unless the conscience of the happier world is aroused, there won't be any funds to feed her little friend, no matter how bad he becomes.

After he had been fitted, I watched her ease the broken apologies for boots back on to the

swollen flesh. She was very tender. She knew how much it hurt, for her own feet were no better. She had auburn hair, which hung in ringlets, and kind gray eyes. She took his hand and helped him off the bench. Away they trudged through the bitter cold and slush, dreaming of Christmas when for once their feet will be protected. My eyes followed them. My eyes followed them so much that that afternoon I did a round of the homes from which these children come. I wanted to find out about the parents—whether this condition of affairs is their fault, due to incurable shiftlessness. I procured my list from the Society of Friends, who are doing a fine work in house to house visitation. From the homes which I visited, I select two examples which vividly illustrate the child need not only of Vienna, but of the whole of Central Europe.

The first home belonged to a man named Klier. He had a wife and three children, the youngest of which was two and a half and the oldest fourteen. Before the war he had been a silversmith and comfortably settled. Today in Austria there is no work for silversmiths and will not be for many years to come. He had served in the army on the Italian front—he still wore his uniform—had been captured and had been a prisoner. Dur-



ing his absence, his wife had had to commence selling the furniture piece by piece to keep the home going. On his return he could not get employment. By the time I saw him every solitary possession which he had had, had gone except two single beds and a pile of rags for coverings. One of those beds he rented to a lodger, the other his wife, self and children slept in by turns through the night, trying to keep themselves warm. Despite this abject poverty, the floor was speckless and had been recently scrubbed. A little gray-faced tot in a solitary garment—a crimson velvet frock donated by the Red Cross—stood stolidly by, while her father talked to me. He had at last got a job on a paper, he said, which would bring him in 1600 crowns a month. 1600 crowns are a little over two dollars in American money, out of which he had to pay his rent and lighting. How was it to be done? He shrugged his shoulders hopelessly and spread his hands abroad. And again I asked a question—did he hope that things would be better in the future? He made no reply, but grabbed the child's hand more protectingly and stared forlornly at the blank wall.

The second home belonged to a man named Lutowsky. He had been a repairer of street-pavements; pavements are taking care of themselves at

present. His household consisted of a grandmother, aged 71, a wife in consumption, due to starvation, and five consumptive children. In painting the picture which I have to paint, I feel ashamed at having pried on such a depth of sorrow. The home consisted of two rooms. In the first the grandmother was washing clothes. She explained that she earned thirty crowns a day for it—less than five cents in American money; but that after a day's work she was always laid up for a week from exhaustion. Before the war she had been in receipt of a pension of twenty-four crowns a month, which would be about five dollars. Since the fall in money values her pension had been raised to fifty crowns, which at present rates of exchange represented less than eight cents a month. How did she exist on it?

In the inner room I found the rest of the family—the son, his wife and the five children. The youngest child was over two years of age and was still at the breast—there was nothing else on which to feed it. The mother was scarcely clad above the waist. Her eyes were sunk deep in her head and burnt with the fever of famine. About her neck a horrid rag was knotted, for her throat was puffed with tubercular glands. She spoke in a hoarse voice, panting with the effort. Her man stood

stonily beside her and made no comment. They had five children, yes. They were nearly naked, as we could see. They were all consumptive and always starved. It hadn't been like this always. Probably they would die soon—she supposed that would be better. Had they any money? Yes, there was her man's unemployment payment, which amounted to a cent and a half a day, American money. The world didn't want them. She coughed. The children commenced to sob, but the man still stared at us stolidly. There was no furniture in the room, save again one bed with a few rags flung over it. The last of a candle guttered in a socket; when that went out, they would be utterly in the dark. By its light, as I turned to go, I noticed that yet another unwanted baby was expected. They had once been self-respecting and happy. And this home was typical of the several million homes in which the five million children of Europe are starving.

In the outer room, as I departed, the old Grannie was again busy at her washing, earning those coveted thirty crowns which would exhaust her. Over her head a motto was pinned against the wall—the only decoration remaining from a former affluence. I asked my interpreter how it read and he translated, “May the Christmas-man bring you good luck from near and far.”

## CHAPTER III

### A DAY OF REST AND GLADNESS

Today being Sunday, a day of rest and gladness when even prisoners do not work, I visited the central gaol of Vienna. Permission is not often granted; in order to obtain it, it was necessary to gain the consent of the President of the Austrian Republic. My object in going was to see for myself to what extent starvation is making criminals out of children and so adding one more grim touch, by destroying characters as well as bodies, to the monstrous sum of Europe's child tragedy.

Before the war the Viennese were among the most happy and law-abiding of citizens. What famine can accomplish in the manufacture of criminals was illustrated by what I saw on this visit.

It was a sunny day with a sky of intensest blue. The snow and slush of Saturday had frozen over, so that the streets gleamed brilliantly in white and steel-gray patches. About the Ring, which encir-

cles the old royal palace, crowds were promenading in the worn finery of pre-war days. There was almost a breath of hope—an unwonted alertness.

We drew up before a frowning pile of buildings, the windows of which are heavily grated, before whose entrances men with rifles stood on guard. We were immediately conducted to the office of the prison-director; he had something to say to us. He was a very humane man and most eager to impress us with his humanity. He had sent for us to warn us that we were about to encounter sights which would probably shock us. Since the war the crime-wave had been on the increase in all countries—especially in those which were most hungry. People seemed to be losing their faculty for distinguishing between mine and thine. This was the case in Austria, with the consequence that the supply of gaols could not cope with the demand of the criminals. All the gaols were overcrowded. This one was. Cells which had been built to hold one prisoner, now contained four; those built to hold nine contained as many as thirty. Of course the sanitary accommodations were insufficient. He did not want us to believe that what we were about to see was typical of Austrian efficiency. We should discover that only one pris-



oner out of four had a bed; that their personal linen was changed only once a month and that the cells were verminous. We should also discover that the greater part of the prisoners had not been brought to trial—many of them had been awaiting their trial three months. These lamentable conditions had produced frequent riots, which had only been quelled by flooding the cells to the depth of a yard. Still worse, children were displaying an increasing tendency to theft. Of course, that might be due to starvation. In pre-war days they had been dealt with in juvenile-court, but now all children of fourteen and up had to be herded with adults. There were so many of them. That was the trouble. Under the circumstances what else could be done? He bade us good-bye with a courtly politeness. His last words were a petition that we would not be shocked. But we were.

And who would not be? Two-thirds of the crimes which had brought these three thousand unfortunates to this pass, fathers, mothers and children, had been stealings incited by hunger. There was one ward of mothers who had stolen to preserve their little ones and were again expecting to become mothers. They were among the very few of the prisoners who were segregated. They sat on the edge of cots in their grated cells, dismally

weeping, wondering no doubt what was happening to the children they had left. Mary, refused admittance to the inn at Bethlehem, has stood in men's minds as the acme of maternal tragedy; but her neglect does not compare with the callous usage of these Viennese, captive mothers. And yet, as the director had said, economic conditions being what they were, what else could you do with them? You couldn't let them go on filching merely because they were mothers.

Among the prisoners we found a great many ex-soldiers. There was one, a strapping chap, who had had all the military decorations he had won tattooed upon his breast. They were plain for everyone to behold as he had only a shirt that was torn. Round his neck was tattooed the Iron Cross and below it, in a long line, all the service medals, starting with the 1914. When he marched away six years ago, how well would he have fought could he have guessed that this would be his reward?

In one cell for six men, into which twenty-six had been crowded, we stumbled on a pathetic piece of vanity. The door was unlocked so quickly that the prisoners were taken unaware. We discovered a man of sixty, with what looked like a terrible wound across his mouth, all bandaged. I turned away to speak to a stunted boy, who looked

about fourteen, to ask him why he was there. He had been arrested for housebreaking because he was hungry. He wasn't fourteen; he was nearly twenty. When I glanced back to the prisoner with the wounded mouth, I found myself face to face with a replica of Hindenburg. The bandage which he had been wearing had been hastily removed. It was a moustache-preserver, with elastics which went behind his ears to keep the contraption in place. Out of all his fallen fortunes, the vermin and the vice, he had salved this petty piece of conceit to heal his wounded pride. And he had cause; he probably possesses the most fiercely up-pointing moustaches in Austria.

Cell after cell was locked and unlocked, giving us instant glimpses of hell. It was famine that had worked this evil; nine-tenths of these people would have remained good but for that. The atmosphere was so putrid that one's throat became sore. We lit cigarettes to conquer the stench. Outside the sun was shining and the sky was dazzling.

This was the day of rest. What did they do with it? Nothing. They sat dolefully in sullen, uncomplaining apathy, brooding and brooding. They had no books, no way of entertaining themselves, save in rare cases where the Society of

Friends had visited them. The Society of Friends is the only institution which does anything for the prisons of Austria. One wondered what stories those walls could tell of what happened after nightfall. It was in the darkness the warder informed us that vermin were most voracious—they crept out. But other things besides vermin creep out in the hours of darkness—evil thoughts, bred of idleness, taking shape in evil acts. Of all this the boys and girls of fourteen and over are witnesses and at last partakers. The sin which has put them in gaol is not theirs, but society's—their hunger. Yet the price they pay is that they leave those walls as moral degenerates. Civilization by its callousness toward these children is running up a heavy score—a score which will one day come up for settlement and which the world, willingly or unwillingly, will have to join in paying. The bill will consist of a leprous taint which will travel in men's bodies down the ages; a legacy of disease and idiocy.

The memory of the horror stings one's eyes and gags one's throat with its foulness. It stirs one's mind to an insanity of anger at the smug complacency of the more fortunate world which contrives excuses for withholding its help. What have these fathers and mothers done to be in gaol?

Their children were dying; it was noble of them to steal. And the little child prisoners, why should they be here? During most of their lives, beginning with the war, they have known nothing but cold and privation. They were taught by necessity to pilfer—which is scarcely a sufficient reason for killing their souls. And please remember that this gaol in Vienna is only a sample of the gaols of all the stricken countries.

The key turned in the lock and the narrow stud-ded door was swung wide, revealing a narrow cell of no more than the dimensions of a double bed. It contained two occupants. One was a woman of the bestial type, almost wholly animal. Her feet were bare, her hair hung matted upon her forehead. Her features were swollen and debased. There was no infamy of uncleanness and violence of which she was not capable. Probably she, too, had her excuses. On the other side of the cell, smiling with wistful expectancy, stood a pretty child. She had black curling hair, a complexion of most delicate rose and coyly-lidded Irish eyes. She leant against the wall, small-boned and frail, confidently surveying us. She was nearly fifteen. This was her second term. She had already served a previous sentence of eighteen months. What for? Stealing. Starvation. No, we hadn't



come to release her—only to gaze at her. But she had thought we were Americans! Her eyes filled and her lip drooped. The door swung to; it clanged pitilessly. She ran forward with a pleading gesture; then the sight of her was shut out. Her hope was gone. We had consigned her to her hell. And she might have been your daughter or mine.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SIGN OF THE FALLING HAMMER

There is an institution in Vienna known as the Dorotheum. It is the Government pawnshop and has for its sign a falling hammer against a sinking sun. More than two hundred years ago it was founded by the good Emperor Joseph to protect his people against the rapacity of private brokers. Formerly the rule was that if articles were not reclaimed within the space of ten months, they would be passed under the hammer. Today the respite for redemption has been cut down to three months; the Government cannot take the risk of a declining currency over a longer period.

This afternoon I visited the Dorotheum. It is a vast building, constructed on the grand scale like a palace. Up and down its marble stairway through the more respectable part of the tragedy of Vienna; pressing hard upon its heels come the vulture purchasers, for the most part foreigners, intent on making bargains out of Austria's want. The Doro-

theum is a museum of domestic sacrifices. Here is the complete story of a country gone bankrupt. There is no exchange in the world that is so crowded. Never in its history did it do so thriving a trade. Early in the morning the crowd begins to gather, each individual carrying a shamefully concealed bundle; it does not disperse till the gates are closed at night. The Dorotheum is patronised by all classes, from the bank-clerk, raising a few crowns on an alarm clock, to the arch-duchess, pledging her jewels. It is one of the last ports of call of the proudly destitute.

Before I made my tour of inspection I was ushered into the presence of the supervisor—a sad, thin man in a flapping black coat who had the nervous cough of an undertaker. He explained that the season being Christmas he was very busy. Trade was brisk; everyone in Vienna had something to sell. This may strike you as quaint, but in Vienna nowadays Christmas is celebrated by pawning and not by purchasing. Because of this the supervisor asked to be excused from conducting me personally over his mausoleum. He entrusted me to a gray, unshaven man who had the appearance of a broken Count. He may have been a Count. An Admiral, who was the hope of the Adriatic navy, is banging at a typewriter today.

This morning I shook the hand of a General, earning ten dollars a month, who once made the Allies tremble by his prowess against the Russians. You can never be quite sure of your companion in this fallen city of tragic transformations.

The first room we entered was jammed to the ceiling with everything from the cheapest electric fittings to the loot of palaces. I noticed a complete set of Empire drawing-room furniture marked at the absurd price of a thousand crowns—rather less than a dollar and a half. There were rare rugs on the walls—the kind one would purchase at Sloane's for anything above three thousand dollars; they were offered at from three to sixty dollars. The sixty dollar one was a magnificent specimen. In another room there was an art gallery, guarded by an ex-engineer of European reputation, who now survives chiefly on tips. The pictures which he guarded were all for sale and many of them the work of famous modern painters. The cheapest I saw was a signed Russian landscape; it would have cost me thirty cents. The dearest, frame and all, could have been mine for six dollars. Art is not much in demand in Vienna.

But the more pathetic sight was not the luxuries of the rich, but the necessities of the respectable middle-class, which had been left unredeemed for

three months and were now to be auctioned off. The price on the tags represented one-third their value, which had been advanced to their owners, plus a margin of interest on the Government's outlay. Here were dresses, millinery, fur coats, gramophones, silver wedding-presents, libraries and even cradles. There was nothing you can think of that goes to make a home that some unfortunate had not pledged and lost.

The Count touched my arm. Wouldn't I like to see how it was done? How what was done? Why, the pledging.

I followed him out of the crowded room, where the foreigners were selecting the bargains for which they intended to bid next day. We went down a narrow, draughty stairway till we found ourselves in a kind of railway station. All along one side was a tier of windows, with iron railings leading up to them, and between the railings queues of tired people. They all carried parcels, as if they were going on a journey, but when they reached the windows they parted with their bundles—pushed them through the slit, waited and went away stuffing wads of paper money in their pockets.

This was the department where the jewelry was pawned. I was escorted through a door into the room which lay behind the windows. Here in



long rows the valuers sat with scales before them and magnifying glasses screwed into their right eyes. As a package was pushed through the slit across the counter they took it, undid it and examined its contents. They tested the stones. They weighed the metal. Then they scribbled on a slip of paper the sum of money the Government was prepared to advance. The pledger never demurred at the amount offered. He presented the slip at a neighboring window and the money was counted out.

Watching from the inside room, where the valuing was in process, I could hardly see the pledgers' faces. It was their hands thrust with a shameful furtiveness through the windows that told their story. All kinds of hands! I remember one pair. They belonged to a man of thirty—they were the supple hands of an artist. Behind the window I could make out his firm, clean-shaven face. Beside him a young woman was standing—probably his wife. My attention was attracted to her because, when he pushed the jewelry across the counter, she made a regretful gesture, as if she would draw it back. The valuer commenced coldly to examine it. The parcel contained a woman's bracelet, a man's cuff-links, a gold watch-chain and a wedding ring. It was the wedding

ring that gave me the meaning of her gesture. The valuer scribbled his offer. It was for 2,400 crowns—about three dollars fifty. The offer was accepted and the next comer's pair of hands were thrust tremblingly into sight.

Last of all I was taken to the auction-rooms, where the sales were in progress. The Count warned me that at this time in the afternoon the auctions were not interesting. It was too late. The expensive lots were sold earlier. But despite his pessimisms, I was interested.

There was a long room, dimly lighted. Running up and down it in an oval, was a pathway of tables. It formed a barrier like the enclosure of a circus. Seated on the outside of it were the bidders, with faces avid as gamblers'. At a high desk the auctioneer sat enthroned—he gets seventy dollars a year for his trouble. In the space on the inside, which the table surrounded, the goods being auctioned were piled. And what do you think they were? Children's toys. Not new toys, but old favorites—dolls and rocking-horses and tin soldiers, the pillage of the nurseries of Vienna. They were the gifts which Santa Claus had left at little bedsides in years when the world was kinder. Like the wedding ring, they had to go. Bread was required.

## CHAPTER V

### ONCE IS ENOUGH

"Once is enough," says Budapest. "We shall never go Bolshevik again." When one listens to the stories of what happened while Hungary was under the heel of Bela Kuhn, his only wonder is that once was not too much. The first man to give me an inside picture was the correspondent of the Manchester Guardian; his mother had been thrown out of a fourth storey window by the pillaging rabble who visited her home. The second was Hungary's greatest iron-master, who crouched with his wife and daughter in an unlighted cupboard during the entire regime of terror. But though Hungary is sincerely repentant and, as an actual fact, less likely than Great Britain or America ever to go Bolshevik, the indiscreet experiment of two years ago has created a prejudice. The need of Hungary is as pressing as that of any Central European country, but a quite insignificant amount of relief work is being done. There has

been no feeding of children since last August, when the funds allotted for that purpose gave out. The American Relief Administration is planning to renew its activities immediately; but the neutral countries, which have carried on such fine work in other famished areas, have done next to nothing for Hungary. Yet Hungary's claims are in many respects more urgent. It has suffered from the war. It has suffered from the Peace Treaty, which has given away to Roumania and Czecko-Slovakia its best wheat-lands and all its important sources of fuel. It has suffered from Bela Kuhn. Last of all and most recent, it has suffered from the Roumanian invasion, which resulted not only in theft on a wholesale scale, but also in the most senseless destruction. From all these causes the country is filled with refugees and naturally the children are the chief sufferers. There are two refugee universities in Budapest, which have taken up their headquarters in old tobacco-factories. When I say refugee universities, I mean literally seats of learning like Yale and Harvard which have transplanted themselves entire, with professors and students and now have no visible means of support.

There are over 40,000 people living in freight-cars in the railroad yards in and around the city. They lack every means of sanitation. Epidemics

are continually springing up among them which threaten to spread throughout the country. At the present moment measles and scarlet fever are rife. There is no means of ventilating a freight-car, except by letting in the cold, and no means of heating it, except by keeping the doors shut and stifling. I visited the freight-car dwellers today and was notified of their presence by a smell not unlike an open sewer. Men, women, and children lay dying in those boxes, while the living slept beside them. There was no attempt at decency. Decency is a weak word. All sense of elementary cleanliness was forgotten. Here women bore children in the publicity of their families and all the intimate details of married life were witnessed by the most innocent and the youngest. The freight-cars of Budapest are not a series of homes, but an itinerant jungle. When the smell becomes too obnoxious in one spot, they are hauled to another. The fate of their occupants is nobody's business; they are left to die.

But these people form only a minute fraction of the sum total of misery. There are upwards of a thousand factories in Budapest and only a hundred of them are in partial operation. Why? The lack of coal. There are no woods in Hungary; it is a land of tillage. Most of the mines were ap-

portioned among other nations. The fields are of little service for food; the Roumanians carried off the seed which was being hoarded for the sowing of the next harvest. The Government hands out ration-cards, designating shops at which the recipients may apply. Queues form early in the morning, but at the end of a long day's waiting the supplies are exhausted. One queue is waiting for fuel, another for milk, another for potatoes. The people who compose them are half-naked; their feet are unshod; the snow is melting; the women carry babies. Can you realize the tragedy at the end of the day when these people return to their families empty-handed?

Misery is best depicted in individual cases. I went to a maternity hospital, where devoted Hungarian women are working without thought of reward to save the lives of the unborn. They have no bed-linen, no medicines, few instruments. The establishment could be run at a cost of two hundred dollars a month—less than the cost of a woman's dress on Fifth Avenue. If the next two hundred dollars are not forthcoming, in the near future the wards will be closed. As it is they are so crowded that a mother can only be cared for for ten days.

As an adjunct to the hospital they have a pre-



ventive department, into which they gather the young girls who would become mothers if they were allowed to run at large. It sounds incredible, but girls are so hungry in Budapest that they will sell their souls to the first comer for a hunk of bread. These girls are collected by the department I have mentioned and are taught to make lace. When I was there today the thread had given out and no more was obtainable. They make their lace for two dollars for eleven yards; in America it would be worth at least two dollars for one yard. As a mere business undertaking it would pay some firm to send the thread from America and purchase the product.

I went to see the homes from which these girl-children came. There is a section of Budapest called Tivoli—why I do not know. It consists of old factories, now stripped and empty. In these buildings the utterly forlorn have taken up their abode.

I wish instead of writing, I could cut down the distance that separates me from America. Then I could bring you by automobile to see for yourselves. A glance would be enough. You would not be able to rest till these wrongs had been righted.

The roads which lead up to Tivoli are mud.

The place is avoided as a contagion. In many of the homes only one member of the family is able to appear at a time—the rest are naked. If they possess a bed, it has nothing but a mattress and the mattress has been slit so that they may crawl in among its straw for covering. As a rule the bed is the only piece of furniture; all the rest has either been sold or broken up for fuel. Everything that will burn has vanished from the landscape—palings, posts, everything. One pushes open a door—not one door, but a thousand; the same sight meets the eyes. There's a mother gaunt with famine, a bare room, an evil odour, a baby thrust into the mattress, boys and girls in rags, almost naked, and a few rotten potatoes lying jumbled on the floor. Of any other kind of food there's not a sign. The moment you appear they start to crawl towards you, hailing you as a deliverer. Any face that is new and unexpected serves to spur their desperate hope. They weep and try to kiss your hands, cringing indecently like animals.

Don't run away with the idea that these people are the scum of the earth; before the war they were as respectable as you or I.

Take the case of Mrs. Richa. She lives in one room with seven children, all of whom are tubercular. Yesterday the room had yet another oc-

cupant, but I arrived too late to see him—this morning he died. He lay in one corner, a little apart from the living and, seeing that he would not usurp it long, he was allowed to have the mattress. This other occupant was Private Richa, the husband of Mrs. Richa and the father of the seven children. He had caught his disease in the winter campaigns against the Russians—consumption. His youngest child—a baby not yet two—was stark naked. The room was bare of everything. None of them had been fed for two days. There was snow outside. When one considers the situation placidly, Private Richa has done rather better than his family.

Or take the case of Mrs. Schwartz. She and her husband had been in a prosperous way and had owned a thriving store. At that time they had had four children. When Hungary was invaded, the Cossacks burnt the store and cut her husband slowly to pieces before her eyes. The result of this is that the youngest child is deaf, dumb and imbecile. In her flight between the retreating and invading armies, two of her children died. She arrived in Budapest like thousands of others, friendless and penniless. Year by year, dragging out the agony, she has starved. When we visited

her she was on her last legs—she could scarcely rise.

These cases can be enumerated endlessly till the sheer weight of their tragedy kills their drama. But the question is what are we going to do about it? Are we going to let millions of human beings die like rats in a hole? Are we going to let the children of Hungary perish? They at least should be saved.

## CHAPTER VI

### IT IS NOT SAFE

Today I had an interview, lasting for an hour, with Admiral Horthy, who is Governor of Hungary. It was he who snatched his country from the throes of Bolshevism and established in the midst of disaster a representative government. He is a patriot and man of the world in the finest sense. He was wounded in the Great War and has lived through to peace days without animosities. My object in seeing him was to obtain a personal statement from him of how he proposed to reconstruct the fallen destinies of Hungary.

I was met by a liaison officer whose wife is an American, resident in New York, and was taken in a car of the American Relief to the palace which sits above the Danube on the heights of Buda. The old magnificence of palace etiquette is still kept up. We mounted the marble stairs, encountering guards, with clanking swords, at every turn. The excursion seemed more like fiction than real-

ity—more like a page out of *The Prisoner of Zenda* through which one walked as a living character. At the top of the staircase we were challenged by halbardiers, in medieval uniforms not dissimilar from those of the Swiss Guards. In an ante-room we were requested to remove our coats and to prepare for the interview. After a wait of not more than five minutes, we were summoned. Passing along a hall filled with priceless cloisonné, we came to a doorway outside which a soldier, caparisoned as though to take part in Grand Opera, was standing. Behind the door a seaman, as bluff and cheery as any British Admiral was seated at a desk. His breast was a rainbow flash of decorations. He rose with his hand outstretched as we entered; his whole attitude one of ease and friendliness.

His first act was to beckon us to a group of chairs and to offer us cigarettes. This was the man on whom at no far distant date the peace of Europe may depend. Admiral Horthy is a clean-shaven, square-faced man, with resolute eyes and the nose of a hawk. The kind of man who inspires trust and whom men cannot fail to like immensely.

My first question was how he accounted for Hungary's present forlorn condition. His answer was forthright—the Peace Treaty. The old Hungary



was an economic entity, complete in itself. It had coal-mines, wheatfields, factories, and was a sea-going nation. Today it has no outlet to the sea, no mines and no money with which to buy the coal to operate its factories. It is like a body in which the arteries have been cut so that the blood cannot circulate. Even its wheatfields have been handed over in part as a bribe to other nations. This would not matter so much if the wheat-lands were under cultivation. But they are not. The wheat-lands apportioned to Roumania were divided among peasants who had not the capital to work them. They were compelled by their Government to accept them under the threat that, if they refused, they would be conscripted into the army. As a consequence, when the world is crying for food, large areas of Hungarian tillage in Roumania's hands are lying idle. They are like the engines and rolling-stock taken in reparation from the enemy, which may be seen in Roumania, Belgium and France rusting on the rails. The old Hungary consisted of a conglomeration of races mutually inter-dependent. Labour travelled from point to point at recognised seasons along recognised routes. At the harvest Roumanian peasants had for centuries come to Hungary to lend a hand. They tried to do the same this year, but were turned

back at the frontier by their own soldiery with a loss of three hundred lives.

"What is the remedy?" I asked.

The Admiral leant forward, gazing at me keenly. "Patience," he said. "In the world, constituted as it is today, injustice cannot triumph. Least of all economic injustice. My job at the moment is to sit on the lid and prevent men who do not know that it will hurt, from ramming their heads against a wall." He made a soothing gesture with his hands, "Keep quiet and wait, I say."

"But while they wait your people are starving," I suggested.

"Yes." He shuddered as though in some spiritual way he had known the agony of starvation. "Yes, they are starving; but it will not be for ever. After the war there was a great lethargy. The nations who had won only thought of themselves. Now they are beginning to think on broader lines—this drive to save our children that you are having in America is proof of that. Next you will begin to enquire into causes and then you will revise the hurried misinformation of the Peace Conference. If you don't, there is always Bolshevism."

"Bolshevism!" I exclaimed. "Do you mean that Hungary would go Bolshevik again?"

"Never," his face clenched like the fingers of a hand. "But if the spring drive of the Russians succeeds, Poland will be overwhelmed. If that happens, many States of Central Europe will go Bolshevik; Hungary will be the only State you will be able to trust. Poor Hungary, whom you have shorn of her possessions, she will be your bridge-head against the tide of anarchy. We shall get our chance to prove then that we are your friends."

"But is there no other way of righting Hungary's wrongs save through violence?" I asked.

"Yes." He spoke seriously. "Through justice. We are a proud people. We don't want charity. We want an opportunity to work. But our hands are ——" He broke off and pressed his hands together as if they were manacled. "How can we work without coal? Our factories are closed. Our people are starving. It is not safe to let people starve too long."

I went away from my interview with Hungary's strong man with those words ringing in my ears, "It is not safe to let people starve too long". On returning to the American Relief Station I heard an uproar of piercing wailing. There was a crowd about the door where the candidates for relief enter. My liaison officer, by virtue of his uniform, elbowed a way for me to the front. On the

cold stone floor a man in a cassock was kneeling. He held a crucifix. In a secret, murmuring flow of words he was praying. Before him lay a human wax-work, who was newly dead; he had collapsed when help was within handstretch. He was a young man, certainly less than thirty, bleached with under-nourishment. He was neatly clad in clothes which were thread-bare; he might have been a shop-keeper or a clerk. The priest continued to pray—the wailing dwindled into the distance down the corridor as a woman was led away. At last a door closed behind her and there was nothing but the silence of the crowd and the murmur of the praying. I glanced at the peering faces, and I knew that it was true, what the strong man of Hungary had said. It is not safe to let a nation starve too long.

## CHAPTER VII

### CHRISTMAS EVE IN VIENNA

This year Santa Claus made a mistake about Vienna; he forgot to come or else he had grown tired of paying visits to a people who are so unhappy. In Vienna they speak of 1920 as the sixth year of the war—they mean the war against hunger. They can afford no more Christmases till the Peace with Hunger has been settled. Some of us who had seen the toys taken from the children being auctioned for bread at the Dorotheum, suspected that this would be the case—Santa Claus would be too busy in England and America to find time to visit the stockings of Vienna; so we conspired to commit the fraud of impersonation. We each stumped up a certain sum with which to purchase flour, bacon, cocoa, rice, sugar and tinned milk. We obtained the addresses from the Society of Friends of twenty-five of the most desperate families. The American Relief Administration lent us a car. As soon as night had fallen we

set off on our rounds; we were warned that if we started too late, we should find all the homes in darkness; the means of illumination are expensive. People go to bed as soon as it becomes dark and save the money that candles would have cost.

We were a curiously constituted party—an amalgam of the new friendship which can alone bring happiness to the world. Our chauffeur, as delighted at the undertaking as anyone, was a German. Our pillar of strength was Dr. John, an Austrian, who had been lamed in the front-line as a combatant by one of the Allies' shells. The rest of us were British and Americans. Three years ago we were all soldiers, thirsting for each other's blood; and here, on this Christmas Eve of 1920, we were crowded together in the same automobile, bound on the one errand. It was wonderful. We thought our way back to that No Man's Land of animosity; it was amazing that we should have hated so much.

We jolted our way between snow-banks, through dim-lit streets, to the poorest quarter of the city. But even here there was a look of tidiness, for Vienna has no slums. The absence of slums in a sense enhances the tragedy of the situation. These people, who are now on their last legs, were formerly thrifty and self-respecting. They did not



merit such a fate. Vienna was a clean city and its municipal government was ahead of the times in the attention that it paid to housing conditions. So it happens that today in well-treed streets, flanked by model dwellings of artistic design, you are deceived unless you look behind the doors; for these people are not incorrigible slovens who parade their griefs and trade upon your pity. They are the unfortunates of a world-wide calamity, who creep into back rooms and prefer to die quietly. What I propose to do is what we did this Christmas Eve—push open a few of the doors and let you see what lies hidden. There is one point which in all fairness it is necessary to emphasize. In none of the cases which I propose to quote was the poverty due to shiftlessness. It was invariably due to one of two causes: the debased value of the currency or the inability to obtain work. The desire to work was always present. If you ask what is the solution, so that neither Vienna nor any other city may again pass through such a travesty of Christmas, I would reply the combined statesmanly effort on the part of more prosperous nations to stabilise Austrian economic conditions.

Between a row of tall houses we drew up against a snow-pile. Dr. John was the first to limp out of the car and to secure the bag of flour. Of all our

gifts the flour was the most unpleasant to carry; it covered one's clothes with a film of white. There was a rivalry at each new stopping-place as to who should perform the task which was least pleasant. Dr. John showed a surprising agility in getting to the flour. If anyone outstripped him, he begged to be allowed to carry it. The reason he gave was that he could do so little for his people and that he alone was an Austrian.

We passed through a dark passage and rapped on a door. It was opened by a scantily clad woman, wasted with consumption. She had five children ranging from six months to fourteen years and a husband who was prematurely white. The room in which they lived was the size of a cupboard and almost entirely filled by a bed, lacking in coverings, and a cradle. The children sat about on the floor in rags. As you might imagine, there was nothing to betray that it was the night before Christmas. Upon enquiry we discovered that the man was a tile-layer and, since all building has been discontinued, is permanently out of work. And yet the astounding thing about these people was their courtesy and courage. They wished us the season's greetings and mustered smiles. The children were led forward to shake our hands. When we produced our presents, they were shaken

by a tremor. One feared they were going to cry. I turned my back in shame at the smallness of the gift and bent over the cradle. Even the baby, when I stroked her cheek, pulled her fingers out of her mouth and gurgled. But the worst shame was yet to come, when we were taking our departure, after we had said good-bye. The father had followed us out into the darkness. I could scarcely see his face. Suddenly he stooped and I knew that he had kissed my hand. The man had been a soldier. Three years ago, had we met, we should have felt it our duty to kill each other. That he should have shown so much emotion made his need vivid. To be kissed by a starving man does not increase one's self-respect.

At the next house at which we halted, we felt convinced there must be some mistake. It had wrought-iron gates and an imposing courtyard. Playing Santa Claus is well enough, but if one left a bag of flour on John D. Rockefeller, the gift might be resented. We checked up the address which the Society of Friends had provided (it was printed in full) as we held the paper beneath the glare of the automobile-lamps. Dr. John set us an example in courage; collaring the bag of flour, he went first. We climbed a well-lighted staircase, passing other occupants of the dwelling who stared

at us mystified. They manifestly belonged to the upper class and could not fathom the purpose of our errand. Again we rapped on a door. A pretty woman of about twenty-five, answered our summons. Dr. John, looking like a miller by this time, tactfully made the explanations. We had brought something for the children. The Society of Friends had told us that milk would be acceptable and we had added a few other things to our present.

There was no mistake. We had come to the right house. The apartment, beyond the hall, was stripped bare. Everything had gone to the Dorotheum—the national pawn-shop—to purchase bread. Her husband was a Government official; the salary he was now getting was four times as large as in pre-war times, but the purchasing power of a crown was a hundred and thirty times less. It was impossible to sustain life on it. They were still occupying their old house because a law had been passed restraining landlords from increasing their pre-war rents. But even at that they would soon have to get out. And then where could they go, with the whole of Vienna under-housed? To the streets, perhaps.

She still maintained her sense of pride. She was terribly grateful, but terribly afraid some of

her neighbours might have seen us. Then she did a thing superbly eloquent. She had asked our nationalities. "American, British and Austrian," we told her, "and there's a German in the car downstairs." Her eyes flooded. She tried to gather all our hands together and clasp them to her breast. "The seventh Christmas of the war!" she said. "And you come here together to help me as friends. Almost you make me believe that the war is ended."

We tiptoed out, moving noiselessly, while she closed the door furtively behind us. We shared her dread lest any act of ours should have betrayed her secret and the neighbours should have guessed.

After several calls we found ourselves again in a poorer district. It was getting late. There were no lights in the windows. We were a little hesitant about ringing more bells. The proper time for Father Christmas to arrive is when people are in bed; but in a city of suspicions and sudden arrests to be roused out of sleep by a group of strange men is more likely to cause alarm than pleasure. We threw in some extra cans of milk as compensation and chanced it.

Our ring was answered after an interval by a cheerful little woman with a wooden leg. She had seven children and was reckoned a widow; her

husband had gone missing in the war. Each child had to be wakened and introduced to us in turn. They stood in a line, blinking shyly and rubbing their drowsy eyes. They had evidently been picked up off the floor, for in the inner room there was only a single bed which, as usual, had as its only covering a mattress. The clothes of the entire seven children would not have decently warmed one child. And yet, despite their leanness and rags they seemed to breathe their mother's optimism. We asked her how she managed to exist. She smiled bravely, tapping with her wooden leg. She worked when she could—yes, at washing. There was her man's pension, and then we must not forget the good God who had sent us.

We glanced round the unfurnished room. It was cold as the street outside, but scrubbed and speckless. There was no doubt that she was good, but one was puzzled to discover why she was so persuaded that God had been good to her. Then she let the secret out—or at least part of it. God was daily feeding three of her seven children at the American Relief Station. She seemed to have the idea that God had a lot in common with the Stars and Stripes. As we turned to go, my eye caught an embroidered motto on the wall, which read, "My kitchen is clean and my food well-cooked;



otherwise I would not be here." So she, too, like the Government official's wife, had her upholding pride. Poverty had failed to down her.

After this we lost our way for a time in a district where more knifings happen than in any other in Vienna. At last we found ourselves in a dank, unlighted room where people rose from the floor like shadows. It was tenanted in all by four adults and five children. One of the children was seriously ill. They hadn't been to see a doctor and didn't know what was the matter with her. She was a pretty, fair little girl and her body was shaken with fever. No, they had no food. That was nothing new. One of the men was a gardener; before gardens grew green it would be easy to die. The other man had been four years a prisoner in Siberia. He had walked most the way back to Vienna. The walking hadn't improved his health. He wondered why he had been so anxious to get back. He was rotting here; he could have rotted with equal ease out there. In the darkness they flapped their rags and coughed. When we produced our food, the men showed no enthusiasm. It was the women, hideously angular, who stooped over our hands and blessed us in the name of their children. We had done them no service with our Christmas presents; we had only prolonged their

agony by a few days' respite. They made us feel that. Individuals could do nothing. It was nations who must act and act quickly if victims of this order were not to perish.

The last visit we paid was in all senses the happiest, for we came face to face with triumphant youth. The single room was in the dreariest tenement we had entered. The snow lay in a melting quagmire outside. It was the nearest approach to a slum I have encountered in Vienna. The walls were peeling with damp and the woodwork was mouldy. We had to climb a flight and then cross along the front of the house by a rickety balcony. Pushing open a window we stumbled on a pathetic sight—six little boys and girls curled up asleep on the bare boards with their flesh showing through their rags. On a bed a handsome man was sitting, strumming softly on a guitar. He was evidently of gipsy origin; his hair was jet black, his moustaches were fiercely curled and his face was marble white. He stared at us doubtfully with his smouldering eyes while the Doctor explained our intrusion. Then he rose with an air of courtliness and made us welcome. There was a wild haughtiness about the man—a native aristocracy—which made us forget his poverty. He had seven children? Yes. We counted the little bodies strewn

about and could reckon only six. He smiled. That was easily explained. The seventh was a girl of eighteen; she would be back presently. And his wife, we asked, where was she? His wife had died last May. She was out with a sack on her shoulder, picking over the old ash-heaps which have not been disturbed for twenty years. She was searching with other women as desperate as herself to find fuel. Not being an expert miner, the ashes had slipped back and buried her. She was smothered before they could dig her out. Since then his daughter, whom he hoped we should meet, had been their mother. For himself, he was a musician and sang in cafés, when people were so good as to listen.

At this point the sound of rushing feet disturbed us. A little girl, who certainly did not look eighteen, butted her way into the midst of us. It was plain that at first she had thought we were the police and was out to fight the lot of us. On finding that our intentions were kind, she fell to laughing. Her merriment was contagious and in strange contrast to her father's tragic attitudes. Her little brothers and sisters woke up and smiled at her. One could see that in her presence they felt safe.

She began to explain between smiles and gulps how happy we had made her. All day she had

been puzzling what to get for the children. She had no money. Tomorrow would be Christmas. Not to give anything would not be right. And now, when she had begun to despair ———. She dragged her ragged family to their feet and pushed them up one by one to kiss our hands. “You shall have a Christmas now,” she kept telling them; “a real Christmas. One of the finest.”

And it took so little to make this great happiness—such a meagre, unworthy sacrifice. One less present in each of your stockings would have brought the same gladness to every starveling in Vienna.

## CHAPTER VIII

### A HOSPITAL IN BUDA

Accounts of the starving children are likely to create the impression that the countries in which they starve are callous. The case is quite the opposite. Hungary, for instance, used to lead the world in its legislation for child-conservation. If the parent failed, the State automatically became the parent. If an unprotected woman were about to become a mother, the State undertook a man's responsibilities, both for the woman and the life unborn. The way in which the law operated was peculiarly humane. There were no barrack-like asylums for the care of these unfortunates. They were placed in the homes of peasants and visited at regular intervals by inspectors whose business it was to see that they were being treated kindly. The mother was not separated from her illegitimate child; they were placed together in surroundings where their position would become normal. Since the war this system has broken down; but as far

as is possible it is still maintained. One needs to disabuse his mind of the prejudice against peoples who are starving, that they are starving because of their own intolerance. One finds instances of spiritual generosity which go far beyond the capacity of the Anglo-Saxon mind.

In Buda there is a mosque, which has stood there for centuries. It marks the tomb of the Moham-medan who brought the first rose to Europe. Because the beauty of his gift has made life more fragrant, religious bigotry has kept aloof from his sleeping-place. There has never been a day since he was buried there that the call to prayer has not sounded from the minaret, proclaiming the greatness of Allah above the roofs of a city which serves a rival god. What does it matter, say the citizens of Buda, if it helps the soul of the giver of our first rose to rest? A people so poetically magnanimous are not likely to be wilfully cruel to children.

I visited the Foundling hospital in Budapest where parentless children are first adopted by the State. It is more like a palace than a hospital—an imposing series of buildings covering several acres; but it is only imposing from the outside. It is over-crowded and under-staffed. The war, with its retreats and invasions, has filled the land with



tuberculosis and rickets. Five hundred are cared for in the cots; thirteen thousand have to be lodged elsewhere. The nurses are in patched clothing and rags. The doctors are worn and pale as ghosts. I saw many of the attendants trudging through the snow without stockings. The wards smell like menageries. They have no soap, no linen, no anything. And this is the institution which once led the world in child-conservation!

Do not think that these conditions are due to carelessness; they are caused by the national bankruptcy. Hungary's exchequer has been pillaged by both Bolsheviks and Roumanians. In the money that is left a depreciation has taken place which would be equalled in American currency if the spending value of the dollar were to become less than that of one cent. Moreover, very many medical requirements have become absolutely unobtainable. Commodities so common as soap, powder, vaseline, linen are not to be purchased. The children born in the hospital are wrapped in paper. Even paper is so scarce that it has to be washed. After it has been washed it cracks. Its edges become sharp as a razor. There is not a baby in that hospital whose tender little body is not covered with cuts and sores. Yet what can the

nurses do? Babies have to be clad. There is nothing but paper.

I wish the people who read this chapter could have accompanied me through those wards. It was the Christmas season. The occupants of the cots were little children; the mothers who bent over them, giving them the last of their strength, were more outcast than Mary.

Because of the coal shortage, no ward in the hospital was properly heated. I was wearing a coat and had to keep it on. In the little railed beds, the babies shivered against the bars on bare mattresses. They wore nothing but a single patched shirt, which left off at the legs for the sake of economy. The impression they created was not even remotely human; they looked like sick monkeys from the tropics who had not become acclimatised. There were lines and lines of them, their bodies blue with cold and criss-crossed with scars. Most of them could not shift themselves; their heads were bumpy and their legs withered. The thing that first struck me was their silence; they had finished all their crying. The doctor informed me that the mortality among them is over thirty per cent. Their ages were anything from the newly born to ten years old. It seemed that

into those buildings was crowded the child misery of all the world.

I stopped to enquire who were their parents. They did not know. Their fathers had been killed in the war and their mothers had died. Some of them had been picked up in the streets where they had been abandoned by parents who could drag no further.

I found myself in the maternity ward. The women were as naked as the children. Of the old stock of gowns only a few were left, which had been patched and darned till there remained scarcely anything of the original fabric. Again, as in the case of the children, the mattresses were bare of coverings. The napkins of the new-born babies were of paper, broken and washed to shreds. And this was the hospital which for mercy once led the world!

I was taken to the laundry to see how the paper was laundered. It so happened that we arrived in time to catch a laundress using a brush to one of the tattered maternity garments. The fury of the Director, who escorted me, was extravagant. It knew no bounds. He shouted and thumped and gesticulated. It was as though the woman had dared to scrub a priceless piece of tapestry. I thought he would have struck her. Later he apologised

to me for his passion, "On our retention of that gown some mother's life may depend."

It was the kind of clout with which no self-respecting housewife in America would have deigned to mop her floor.

## CHAPTER IX

### AN ECONOMIC EXPERIMENT

“They wouldn’t need to starve if they would get to work.” The retort and the criticism which it implies are as shallow as they are selfish. Central Europe wants to work. It is begging for the chance to work; but it cannot work efficiently while it is under-nourished.

Here in Prague there is an American business man who has probed deeper into the Czecho-Slovak economic situation than all the politicians. He has found a way to feed the nation and to make a profit for himself. He bases his calculations on the firm belief that a people, heretofore industrious, still retains the habit; all they require to set them on their feet is food. He is willing to provide the food and to risk his capital on their bare word that they will play the game by him.

He has started his experiment with the miners of Carlsbad. The Government food-ration allowed to working miners is precisely half what it

ought to be. He has offered to supply the other half of the ration, bringing their allowance up to normal, on condition that the miners will do their best to increase their output of coal by 20 per cent. They are not to make this increase by working overtime, but by speeding up during their ordinary working hours. The average of their present output is calculated on the results of the past nine months. As repayment and profit on his investment, he is given the option to purchase one-half of the 20 per cent. increased output at the inland price, i. e., the price that coal is selling for in Czecho-Slovakia. He makes his profit by exporting. The question immediately arises, why could not Czecho-Slovakia do the exporting and make the profit herself? The answer is that the partitioning of Austro-Hungary by the Peace Treaty and the consequent establishing of new frontiers has bred such a deep international distrust that the new nations are reluctant to let their freight-cars pass out of their own territory for fear they should never recover them. At the border merchandise is unloaded and re-shipped, which adds considerably to the expense of transportation. Major S., being an American, has a superior reputation for integrity and his word is accepted when he promises



that cars carrying his shipments out of Czecho-Slovakia will be returned.

The scheme is much more far-reaching than at first sight it appears. It embraces not only the feeding of the men, but also of their families. His share of the coal he intends to sell to Austria, just across the border, where the scarcity of every kind of fuel is causing a crisis. When he has done this, many Austrian factories which have been standing idle will be able to re-open. So, by feeding the Carlsbad miners, he is re-employing the Austrian working-man.

He was warned when he first discussed his plans, that they would be rejected by Government and miners alike. On the contrary they have been eagerly accepted by both Government and miners; but most eagerly by the miners. The miners all over Czecho-Slovakia are clamouring to be given the same opportunity. If it pays an individual to indulge in this kind of commercial enterprise, it would equally pay the Allies. For, while this is no philanthropy, it attains the ends of philanthropy and has the added advantage that it is economically constructive. To state the case cynically, the politicians of the Allies can play the part of Good Samaritans and find themselves in pocket. The experiment which has started with the miners of

Carlsbad can be extended to cover almost all branches of industry. But the value of the experiment and its eager acceptance proves that it is not unwillingness, but inability due to undernourishment, that prevents Central Europe from getting to work.

In Czecho-Slovakia, as in Hungary and Austria, the commercial stagnation which has produced every kind of shortage, is chiefly to be traced to the establishing of new frontiers. When the Peace Treaty repartitioned Europe, it took apart a watch which was going, and failed to put it together. All the cogs and wheels are still here, but they lie scattered about and consequently there is no movement. An example of this disorganization is near at hand. The peasants of a certain district of what is now Czecho-Slovakia, were accustomed to gain their bread by felling trees in the winter and floating them down the rivers in the summer to Hungary. In Hungary they sold their logs and stayed to help with the harvest. Then they returned to their homes in the mountains to eke out a livelihood for the next nine months with the money they had thus earned. Now that Ruthenia has become Czecho-Slovak and a frontier has been established, they are no longer allowed to pass freely into Hungary; consequently they starve.

The trees in their forests as of old stand ready for the cutting. The peasants are more anxious than ever to make their traditional excursion. But someone in Paris scrawled on a map with a blue-pencil, so the trees are not felled and the peasants starve. Conditions are so bad in these primitive villages that the children would not have lived the year out had not the American Relief Administration made their rescue one of its special objects.

Here again, as with the miners, the starvation is not caused by unwillingness to work, but by the volcanic upheavals of war, followed by a political redistribution which has destroyed economic stability and criss-crossed Central Europe with hostile tariff walls in places where the flow of trade was once traditional and amiable. Whether these countries will be able to function efficiently after they have adapted themselves to their new boundaries is a question which only time can prove. For the moment, as though one had dammed torrents within new confines, diverting them from their ancient courses, there is a seething swirl of unrest, then an over-flowing and then stagnation.

All the railroads run towards Vienna, which was the great middleman city for the old empire. Hungary sent grain. Bohemia sent coal. They

did their trading there and exchanged their products for commodities which they could not produce themselves. Today Vienna is isolated in a small patch of scrubby country which is the new Austria. The new Austria has no natural resources on which to maintain its population. The only way its people can hope to gain a living is by being again, what they once were, Central Europe's middlemen. But their currency is so debased that its purchasing value is almost gone. No one who had anything of actual value would go to Vienna to exchange it for their unreal money. Nevertheless, the railroads still converge there; there has been no time to change them. For all the purpose they serve they might as well run out into the Sahara desert. The political map, as re-arranged by the Peace, has built walls across most of the old travel-routes; it has given ancient hostilities a new means of venting their animosities, has destroyed confidence and dislocated the entire system of transport. This is without doubt the fundamental answer to the question, "Why does Central Europe starve?" The fault is not one of sulkiness or laziness on the part of the people who do the starving. They are not starving in order to spite the Allies or because they derive a patriotic ecstasy from starvation. They want to work and they prefer employment to

charity. They claim the right to work; but if their work is to be of any value to the world, we must first restore to them their vitality, by nourishing their famished bodies, and then stabilise their economic conditions so that the marketing of the results of their industry may be assured.

## CHAPTER X

### BABUSCHKA

Prague is one of the more important of the jumping off points for Bolshevist propaganda in Europe; it is at the same time a rendezvous for exiled Russians of moderate views, who are conspiring to overthrow the Red regime the moment the hour seems propitious. These exiled Russians all belong to the *Intelligencia*—the cultured middle-class. They are university students, professors, doctors, engineers—the people of brains and small means who do the sane thinking for whatever nation. They are a class which is being rapidly exterminated in all the stricken countries. In Russia they have been smashed into oblivion with clubs and rifles; in Central Europe they are dying more respectably, because more privately, of famine. Here, in Prague, for instance, poorly as a working man is paid, his wages are higher than a school-teacher's.

A fund for their partial rescue has been placed



in the hands of the American Relief Administration by the will of Mr. Harkness. I saw what it was accomplishing for the first time in Vienna, when I lunched with the professors of the University, many of whom are world-famous in their various departments of research. The terrible problem that they have to face is explained at once when it is stated that the highest salary paid to a professor, if exchanged into American currency, would be worth at most one hundred dollars a year. That is the highest; the bulk of the salaries are much less. Before the war, when a crown had the spending value of twenty-two cents, they could live comfortably and with the necessary ease of mind. Today, when the crown has shrunk to the value of one-sixth of a cent, they find themselves in penury.

The Harkness Fund is providing the professors of Vienna with one meal a day, to which the professors themselves contribute one twenty-fourth. I watched them come in to lunch and the ravenous way in which they ate. I tried to bring the significance of the scene home to myself by shifting the stage-setting to Harvard or Oxford. They were men of the highest intellectual type and of an achievement which speaks for itself. The science and learning of both America and Great Britain

are already the wiser for their devotion. Today we are saving thousands of lives by the past results of their medical discoveries. Most emphatically they are the kind of men who, were they to perish, it would be impossible to replace. And here they were cold, ill-nourished, shabby, bending voraciously over a rough plenty as though they were outcasts from the gutter. As the lunch progressed one noticed that, despite their hunger, they were restraining their appetites. The bread by their plates remained untouched. To the bread they added various morsels, till by the end of the meal a little pile had grown up. Before each left, he drew out a piece of paper and surreptitiously made a bundle of the pile, which he slipped into his pocket, glancing this way and that to see whether he was observed. Then he hurried out to where a wife and children were counting the seconds till his coming.

The next time I saw the Harkness Fund at work was here in Prague. The American Relief Administration had taken a hall and provided a Christmas entertainment at which food-packages were to be distributed to the exiled Russian Intelligencia. When we arrived the hall was jammed. There were girl university students, with their hair cropped like the women in the Battalion of Death. They were

clad for the most part in old dresses which had been collected by the Red Cross in America. There were tottering middle-aged professors, the counterpart of those whom I had seen in Vienna. There were soldiers of Denikin's and Kolchak's armies in the loose Russian military blouse. Most of these were students who are pursuing their studies at Prague University and living of necessity in human pig-sties. And then there were mothers, dragged to pieces by adversity, carrying babies, with still more babies clinging to their skirts. Yet, despite their poverty, the gathering had an ecstatic, valiant look. One glanced from one white face to the next—at the gray-white sea they made when massed together. The spirit which lay behind those faces was not broken. Pinched, neglected, emaciated, misunderstood—yes; but it still stood erect to greet the future. It believed in the future. It hoped. Moving through the throng like a blessing, came a little bowed old woman. Her eyes were dim. She had to lean on a tall young soldier's arm to support herself. Over her cropped gray head she wore a gray piece of cloth, folded in a triangle. "Babuschka! Babuschka!" the whisper went round. It grew into something like a shout. There was no surging, no jostling. The people went forward

one by one to greet her. She placed her old gnarled hands on their shoulders, drawing their heads down, so that she could kiss them. Babuschka—the little grandmother! They were all grandsons and granddaughters to her. She might have been a saint—but she was too human. She preferred to be what she has always been, the little grandmother of exiled Russia.

Next day I went to see where the Intelligencia of Russia are living. They are housed in a damp, unheated barracks. I opened endless doors; there were rows and rows of spavined, unrestful beds. Czecho-Slovakia is not pleased at their presence; they are unwelcome guests. But, if their hope comes true, they are the briens of the new and better Russia which will give a lasting peace to the world. Because they believe their hope will come true, they train their brains relentlessly, studying, studying, studying. It does not matter that they are not wanted. They will be wanted. Meanwhile they starve and attend the University and learn.

And then I went to see Babuschka, who has kept this lamp of ardent idealism burning. She made me her grandson the moment I entered, brushing aside my stiffly proffered hand, putting her arms round my shoulders and dragging down my face

to hers. After that things were easier; her all-embracing love had caught me in its web.

Why did they send her to Siberia? She is seventy-seven now and more than half her years have been spent in exile. After having achieved her goal, she has again been made an exile. This time by the Red Terror. You know who she is, for she has been several times to Great Britain and America. She is Catherina Breshkoffskaja, better known as the Grandmother of the Russian Revolution, and beloved by her countrymen as Babuschka.

For two solid hours she spoke to me about Russia, telling me how good and simple the Russian peasants were. "The Red Terror will be over by spring," she said; "the peasants will not stand it longer. I know. We go into Russia secretly, constantly; we see for ourselves. We are educating the people at the risk of our lives, taking literature to them and preaching our program. When our hour comes, we shall establish freedom and give the land to the man who works it. I am seventy-seven, but I shall live to see the end of Bolshevism and the beginning of a happier world." Her eyes became clear as a girl's; she clutched my hands. "Tell America and England to be patient with us. Make them believe that we are good like themselves.

The Russian people are little children—they are not bad. They are growing up. Tell them we want their affection, so that we may grow up to be clean and valiant.”

The door opened; a man entered with a rush of footsteps. He knelt beside her, kissing her hands in reverence. He was going on a journey. When he goes on a journey, especially in an eastwardly direction, he is never certain whether he will return. Lest the blank wall and the firing-squad should wait for him, he had come to receive her blessing. Babuschka took his yearning face, kissing his eyes, his cheeks, his mouth. Across his shoulder she gazed at me and nodded. “It is Kerensky, the knight-errant of Russia, who wants nothing for himself.”



## CHAPTER XI

### THE SOUL OF POLAND

Poland is commencing the New Year with her face towards peace and the hope in her heart that she may never have to fight again. For her the war has lasted two years longer than for any other country. During the past six years she has had to fight on five separate fronts. Her devastated area is greater than that of France. She has cities which have been captured and occupied seven separate times since 1914 by the armies of seven separate nations. She is sick of war. She has elected a peasant for her prime minister—a man who belongs to the class which gains nothing but sorrow from bloodshed. All that Poland asks from the New Year is the quiet in which to convalesce from her wounds, so that she may gather strength to construct her nationhood along the lines of statesmanly righteousness. As the clocks above Warsaw struck the hour of midnight, the prayer in every heart was, "God give us peace with the New Year."

How badly she requires peace and how bitterly she stands in need of the world's mercy, no one can conceive who has not been here. She is a land of widows, cripples and orphans. She has two millions of under-nourished children, of whom only one million are being cared for. She has a million refugees within her borders. Her mark, which was originally worth twenty-five cents, has sunk to an exchange value of one-sixth of a cent. The barbed wire entanglements come up to the very gates of Warsaw. The threat of a Bolshevik invasion in the spring is like a brutal hand, clapped against her lips, silencing laughter. It compels her, against her will, to keep her army mobilised; if she disbanded, she would make invasion certain. Every man she keeps under arms loses her a little of the world's sympathy. She knows that, but she does not dare to be unprotected. She is a nation in rags. Until the American Relief Administration came, she was a nation of funerals.

And yet none of her misfortunes have quenched her unconquerable valor. In Cracow stands the famous church of St. Mary's. Centuries ago it was a watch-tower against the invading Tartar; a soldier was kept constantly stationed there to give warning on a trumpet of the first approach of danger. In the fourteenth century, while rousing the city

to its peril, the trumpeter was struck in the throat by an enemy's arrow. His call faltered, rallied and sank. Then, with his dying breath, he sounded a last blast, which broke off short. The broken call saved the city. Ever since, to commemorate his faithfulness, there has never been an hour, day or night, when his broken trumpet-call, ending abruptly in an abyss of silence, has not been sounded from the tower. The man symbolises the soul of Poland—the soul of a dying trumpeter who blows a last blast of warning above the sleeping roofs of civilization.

Poland will surely die in her watch-tower unless the sleeping world whom she protects, awakes and comes to her rescue. She is dying gamely, with her back to the wall. She does not whine—she does not slacken in her effort. The smallest children make themselves sharers in her sacrifice. If you go to the American soup-kitchens you will find tiny mites of six and seven shivering in queues to secure the rations. They are there because they are the only members of the family young enough to be spared. If you question them, you will find that they have left still younger babies locked up in the squalid rooms that they call home. To prove their assertion they show you the key that

they carry round their necks. From dawn to dark the elder children and parents are out at work.

A little girl of eight came to the officials of the Relief Administration the other day with a pathetic request. She came by herself and explained that the idea was entirely her own. She wanted to be sent to America. But had she relations in America? No. Then had she no one whom she loved in Poland? Yes—her father and mother. But would she want to leave them? At that question she began to cry. It would hurt her very much to leave them; but she was so young. There was no other way to help; she could only eat and there was so little food. If she went away, there would be more for someone else.

This magnanimity of devotion touches every class—especially the women. There is an order in Poland known as the Gray Samaritans. They are Y. W. C. A. girls of Polish blood, recruited in America, and are among the most gallant helpers that the American Relief Administration possesses. Their business is to go into the most remote villages, many of which lie far away from railroads. The story of the privations of their travels would fill volumes. In these villages they establish feeding-stations, train the peasants in their manage-

ment and then pass on to the next point where the need is greatest.

Another order of purely Polish origin is The Women's Battalion of Death. They started in Lemberg, in a crisis of invasion, when not a single man was left. The last man, if he may be so called, had been a boy of fourteen, who had been shot by the enemy as he was searching for protection for the women. In their dilemma the women armed themselves. The movement spread; and so the Battalion of Death became a permanency.

On New Year's Eve I went to visit them; they were housed in a damp building across the Vistula, which had formerly been used as a prison for captured Russian soldiers. Its passages had a mildewed smell; they were stone-paved and dark as a dungeon. A door opened. We felt our way across a vaulted cellar crowded with gray-blanketed, unlovely beds. Another door opened. The sound of fresh, young voices rushed to meet us and the tinkling of a worn piano. In a bare, chill room the girl-soldiers of Poland were gathered. It was their New Year's festival. I think the first thing we noticed was the merriment of their eyes and the roundness of their close cropped heads. It would have been easy to have mistaken them for boys in their dingy khaki. A Christmas tree stood

in the corner robbed of all its presents. They had been dancing as we entered and were halted, still in couples, gazing towards us shyly. They looked children. In a land less sorely pressed, they would have had their hair in pigtails and have been romping in school. Certainly they were not a sight to inspire terror. The youngest was fifteen—the average age eighteen to twenty. You would never have imagined that they were a Battalion of Death. Then you talked with them and understood.

There was one girl who was a sample of the rest. She was pretty, despite her shaven head; her complexion was high and her eyes frank. She was the kind of a girl who ought to have had her suitors. Yes, she had seen fighting; it was in the trenches at Vilna. They had held on too long after the retreat had commenced. The first thing they knew, the Bolos were upon them. They came firing as they advanced and her companions were falling. At the last moment, to save herself, she had shammed death and hidden herself beneath the corpses. Then followed the story of her escape, told casually, as though it were the sort of thing that might happen to any girl. She was just nineteen and of gentle birth. When the fighting was at its height, there had been girls of title in her bat-



talion; it had been recruited from all ranks, the same as the men's. Now that the ordeal was over for the moment, the girls who remained were mostly peasants. Why did she remain? I asked many of them that question before the evening was ended. The answer which they gave me was always the same, though phrased in different words, "To help Poland."

They didn't mind how they were employed, so long as they helped. They didn't care how much they suffered, so long as they helped. They were guarding stores of food at present because they were more honest than the men. But they would work in soup-kitchens, anywhere, at anything. If the war sprang up again, they would fight.

They were mere kiddies, most of them, laughing and irrepressible. They wanted to be free to live, to possess lovers, to be mothers, to have children. But, like the trumpeter of Cracow, they would not desert their post while their warning might save the sleeping world.

At the State Reception at the Winter Palace, I gained a further glimpse into the heart of Polish heroism. I was speaking to Prince Sapieha, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He pointed to the fireplace of the Reception Room. "It was standing there," he said, "that Tsar Alexander II gave the

death blow to our hopes. We had heard that he was generous and we had believed that he would free us and give us justice. There in front of the fireplace he met our patriots who had come to plead with him. Before they commenced, 'Point de reveries'—no dreams, he said. That has been our answer through all the ages, whenever we have complained to our oppressors. They have told us, 'No dreams;' but we have gone on dreaming till at last our dreams have come true. We dreamed the seemingly impossible; and we have dreamt ourselves into freedom."

## CHAPTER XII

### ONE CHILD'S STORY

Some weeks ago a haggard man limped into the headquarters office of the American Relief in Warsaw. He had come to seek assistance for his daughter. She had just escaped from Khar-kov, where she had been held a prisoner by the Bolshevists for many months. Her health was broken with hardship; if something were not done for her, she would die. Unfortunately he could not offer money; but whatever was done for her he would consider a debt, which one day he would repay. By profession he was an engineer. The Georgian Government owed him the equivalent of over three hundred thousand dollars. He had only that day recovered his daughter and learnt of her condition. While she was being taken prisoner at Kiev and carried a thousand miles into the interior, he had been cut off in the Caucasus by another Bolshevik offensive. She had been escaping while he also had been escaping,

and neither had known of the other's predicament. From places as far apart as continents, after life and death adventures, they had both reached Warsaw on the same day and had arrived at the house of a relative within a few hours of each other. He was almost as spent as she was. From being rich he was penniless. She was the apple of his eye; she was only fourteen and in danger of dying. There was no one to whom he could turn in his distress. So he had bethought himself of the Americans.

Upon investigation his story proved correct. His daughter, Wanda Marchzcloska, was in the last stages of exhaustion. The American Children's Relief took her in hand, feeding her first of all on milk, a luxury in Poland, till at last she was brought back to strength. Her story is worth recording, as illustrating what relief work is doing and the kind of sufferings which children are called on to endure in this outpost of civilization. This is how she told it.

She was in Kiev with her mother when the Bolsheviks stormed the city last May. In the confusion she got separated, her mother escaping while she was taken prisoner. With ten other Polish girls and eighteen boys, she was herded by rail and road to Kharkov, a town very far in the

interior. On arrival there, after many miseries, they were lined up in the square and sentenced to be shot. On the instant that the sentence had been pronounced it was carried out. When the firing stopped, only she and another girl remained. A consultation took place; it was decided that she, on account of her youth, should be spared. The soldiers pleaded for her. But the other girl ——.

The other girl had had a sister who now lay dead across her feet, killed by the first volley. When she understood that she also had to die, she commenced to weep bitterly. Wanda Marchz-closka placed her arms about her, whispering, "Remember, you are Polish." The tears were dried. Standing up bravely, her hair loose about her shoulders, she met death with a smile. And so Wanda, aged fourteen, was left.

Throughout the summer her life was a living hell. She was made the drudge of the prison. She was worked to a shadow. She was given little to eat and scarcely any rest. She received many blows; her companions were brutalised men and women who had lost every instinct of mercy. It was hot within those walls, she told me—like a furnace. Very often she wished that the soldiers had not pleaded for her; she wanted to be dead. But the phrase she had uttered to the girl who was

to be shot, lingered in her memory, "Remember, you are Polish." She repeated it beneath her breath when the blows were hard to bear, "Remember, you are Polish." Among all the foulness of people and surroundings, she kept her soul clean by remembering that she was different: she was Polish.

By August she had served her punishment and was released. Her one thought was to get back to her parents. She set out for Kiev. More than a thousand miles lay between herself and her goal. How she accomplished the journey even she cannot tell. The nights were very dark, she says; they caused her to fear greatly. She hid in woods. She slept on the bare ground. She lived on roots. Sometimes she thought that those dead children who had been shot in the square, accompanied her. By luck and cunning she made the last part of her journey to Kiev by rail. When she got there it was to find that the city was still in Bolshevik hands. She had no passports; if she had had them, they would not have served her. But how to get across the frontier into Poland?

She took to the woods again, this fourteen year old girl, with her body that was a bag of bones, tattooed with scars and bruises. Growing feebler and feebler she struggled on. The last hundred



miles were the hardest. But she urged herself forward by repeating, "Remember, you are Polish."

She does not know at what point she crossed the frontier, or how, or when. There are gaps in her memory and visions of blank fields across which moves a scarcecrow figure; it must have been her own, she supposes. After that she forgets everything, till her father's arms were about her, and she was realising that he was as woe-begone as herself.

That is one child's story. It could be multiplied by thousands. Her life was saved by the random generosity of some chance giver in America. I wish he could have seen her today, grateful and demure as she stood before me. I think he would have slipped his hand again into his pocket and before he counted his loose bills would have whispered, "Remember, you are American."

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE CASE OF MARKI

Why does Poland starve? The question needs answering. In our secret hearts we people who have plenty, are inclined to suspect that the nations who suffer are purchasing their hunger with idleness. I do not pretend that the situation at Marki answers all the question, but certainly the reasons for the hunger there apply to very many towns which once were hives of industry.

Marki lies six miles to the east of Warsaw in the direct path of a Russian advance. The country through which one approaches it is still marred by defenses and barbed wire entanglements, hastily prepared last summer to hold up the Bolshevik attack. Before the war it was a Polish Bourneville or Port Sunlight—a successful experiment in housing workmen in healthy surroundings. The village centred about a woollen mill, which supported three thousand employees. The employees had homes in model dwellings, rented to them at a

moderate figure. They were provided with an up-to-date school, a hospital, bath-houses, etc., and were in an exceptional state of contentment. When the great strike occurred in 1905 and 1906, they refused to leave their work and only joined at length under threats and at the revolver's point. The owners of the mill were originally British, though circumstances have made it wise for them to become Polish citizens. They were residents of Marki and one of them, with whom I spoke today, still retains his Lancashire dialect. Since 1884 the mill had been manufacturing yarn, until in 1914 it had attained a weekly output of one hundred thousand pounds. It traded under the name of E. Briggs Brothers and Company. Then came the war, the general dislocation and the end of prosperity.

Marki was in Russian Poland. In 1916 it was captured by the Germans. The mill became a prison-camp for interned Russian soldiers and industry was at a standstill. Obviously, when there was a crying need for woollens, it was bad economy to allow this intricate mass of valuable machinery to stand idle. A German manufacturer was sent down, with a view to setting it going. His plans were almost completed, when the Roh Stoff Abteilung got wind of what was happening. The

Roh Stoff Abteilung was a company organized for the systematic looting of captured territories. It paid the German Government a lump sum for its privileges and an additional percentage on its profits. It dispatched an agent to Marki to make a report on the opportunities, with the result that the compatriot manufacturer was ousted and the wrecking of the machinery commenced.

Today one of the partners, Mr. Charles Whitehead, took me over what was left after the Roh Stoff Abteilung had completed its work. All the boilers, motors, piping, belting, brass and copper parts have been torn out. Even the cork that insulated the roofs has been removed. The bulk of the machinery still stands, but until the stolen parts have been put back the whole is rendered useless. To replace these parts is no easy task when six hundred Polish marks are only worth a dollar and most of civilized Europe is in disrepair. The damage done was so senseless. The rewards gained from the sale of the jumbled loot were so disproportionately small as compared with the expense of its replacement. And so the model village of Marki is a model no longer. The houses are bare of furniture; the furniture has been sold for food. The inhabitants are in rags; they shiver and clutch themselves in a desperate endeavour

to withstand the wintry chill. They have neither shoes nor stockings. They die like flies in their model dwellings. Because of one ruthless act, three thousand willing workers are idle and all the women and children who are dependent on them starve. I do not quote this instance to make the Germans appear sinners above all men. Ruthlessness goes hand in hand with war. You may find the same wilfulness of destruction on all the five fronts on which Poland has been attacked. Cattle, which could not be carried off, have been butchered. Houses have been burned. Pictures, art-treasures and things irreplaceable have been smashed to atoms.

But to get back to Marki, how have these three thousand ex-employees and their dependents managed to survive until now? All of them have not survived; the youngest, oldest and weakest have perished. Of the remainder some are in the army. Some have moved away. Others go to work in Warsaw; they have to leave Marki at five in the morning to tramp the six miles to the city and do not get back till nine at night. The women have discovered an illegal method of eking out a livelihood. Flour is Government controlled; it is forbidden to bake it and traffic in it as bread. But the regulated price of flour is so low that the farmer

often prefers to feed the wheat to his cattle. By walking fifteen miles into the country, the women of Marki, are often able to strike a bargain with a peasant. They bring their treasure home, convert it into bread, walk another six miles in the opposite direction and hawk it in Warsaw. The police are on the outlook for such petty criminals. Some of them get caught; their merchandise is confiscated and they are sent to prison. From being honest women they become gaol-birds.

As a model village you could scarcely imagine any sight more hopeless than the Marki of today. The stillness of death is in the streets. The chimneys are breathless. The people are lean, famine-fevered shadows. There is no laughter. No stir. Funerals are too common to cause excitement. While the machinery rots in the mill, men's souls rot in their bodies. From a place which was once throbbing with energy the incentive to endeavour has seeped away. There is no possibility to work; and if there were, there is not the strength to undertake it.

And yet there is one building which shelters a gleam of hope—the school-house in which the American Relief has established its children's feeding station. It was Mr. Whitehead, part-owner of the pillaged mill, who led me to it. "If you

have any ability," he said, "to make conditions known, I wish you would tell the world what Marki owes to America. Six hundred children died of hunger in our village the year before the Americans came. Whatever happens to us older fellows, they have saved our rising generation. I am getting the money to patch up my machinery; if I live long enough, I shall have all of it running again. But shall I be able to patch up the machinery of human bodies? My people are no more capable of working than my machinery is of running at present. Their strength has been looted. They must be repaired, just the same as the machinery in my mill."

And what I saw on a small scale in Marki is true of the whole of Poland.



## CHAPTER XIV

### AN IMPERIAL BREAD-LINE

If you can imagine the House of Lords standing in the bread-line, you will be able to picture the sight that I saw today. I suppose nothing like it has been seen since the French Revolution—no reversal of social fortunes half so tragic and poignantly dramatic. It was an object lesson to anyone who believes that aristocracy is anything more than environment.

What I really saw was the Imperial Russian Court in miniature. The lady who introduced me was the wife of the Tsar's High Chamberlain, Madame Lubinoff. Her husband, at the commencement of the war, was Civil Governor of Warsaw. Her home was a palace, which is now occupied by Poland's peasant Prime Minister. To-day her husband is her secretary at the soup-kitchen which she conducts for the Russian Red Cross; her home is as humble as an artisan's; the people to whom she ministers are princes and princesses in burst out boots and tatters.

I had been told of the wonderful work which Madame Lubinoff has done for her exiled compatriots. I had also been told that her work was soon to be abandoned; that she had sold almost the last of her jewels and that the funds with which the Russian Red Cross at Paris had provided her had given out.

We departed in search of her soup-kitchen at about twelve o'clock—the worst hour you can choose if you wish to get quickly from point to point in Warsaw, for midday is consecrated to funerals. There are so many of them that they form almost a continuous procession. They are of all kinds, from the two-horse hearse, attended by mourning-carriages, to the lonely man and woman, plodding hopelessly through the mud, carrying a little child's coffin between them. In spite of delays we arrived at last at a gateway, leading off a narrow street in one of the least prosperous quarters of the city. The squalid courtyard beyond the gateway was crowded with wolfish men and women. They were a strange collection, brow-beaten and famished. The women wore shawls over their heads; they looked typical slum-dwellers. Many of the men were in tattered uniforms; all of them were unshaven and cringing as pedlars. We had to force our way up the nar-

row stairs to Madame Lubinoff's office, into which we were ushered by a grave-faced servant who turned out to be her husband. The Bolshevists arrested him in Petrograd and imprisoned him for ten months in the dreaded fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul—which goes far to account for his crushed demeanour. It was his wife who rescued him, by risking her own life and bribing his gaolers, which has nothing to do with the present story.

Madame Lubinoff is a gay and beautiful woman, who hovers always between tears and laughter. The tears are real, but the laughter is forced. One marvels at the courage of her tremendous acting. It all started, this work that she is conducting, she told us, with the sale of a ring. When she discovered how many lives one ring could save, she sold more. She had been luckier than most of her Russian friends who, when the Bolshevist regime set in, had lost everything; whereas she, inasmuch as Warsaw was Polish, had managed to preserve many of her personal belongings, though of course her Russian estates were confiscated. The present building in which she has established her soup-kitchen had been a Russian Church. She gained permission from the priest to use it by means of flattery; she kissed his hand, which is an honour paid only to a bishop. She laughed. For the

money with which to run it she sold her jewels and kept on selling them, till the Russian Red Cross in Paris got to hear about her. For a time they helped with contributions, but last October they notified her that they could help no longer. Then the American Relief had come to the rescue with a donation from the fund left by Mr. Harkness to be expended on the Intelligencia of Europe. And now that was exhausted. What was she going to do next? Ah, that was the question! If she did not do something the seven thousand men, women and children whom she was feeding would play leading rôles in the daily funerals. She laughed and blinked the tears out of her eyes. They did things better in the French Revolution; the guillotine was so very much quicker. Perhaps we would like her to show us round.

Outside the door, doing clerking at a rickety table, a grubby yet distinguished man was sitting. She introduced him as Prince Ouhtomsky. He shook our hands with a manner of extreme courtliness; when we were out of earshot, she revealed his story. When Warsaw was a part of Russian Poland he had been one of the richest men in the country. He had belonged to the hereditary land-owning class, his grants having been made directly to his family by the Tsar. He was now

working for his dinner and two dollars and a half a week. When she found him, he and his princess had been living in a room which they shared with other people. He had been trying to keep the wolf from the door by manufacturing cigarettes. They were not good cigarettes—cigarette making was not his profession. Besides, it was illegal in Poland; it was a Government monopoly. So she had rescued him and given him the job of sealing envelopes. By allowing him to believe that he was earning his keep, she prevented him from being too unhappy.

As we passed out through the crowd of be-shawled women, various of them tried to attract Madame Lubinoff's attention. Some she embraced, addressing them as "My dear Princess," "My dear Baroness," "My dear Countess." Despite their sodden appearance, their display of etiquette was magnificent and exacting. They drew themselves up with a flash of haughtiness as though their Cinderella appearance of poverty were no more than fancy-dress. One was reminded that they had once belonged to the most polished caste of Europe. The effect was pitiful and fantastic. Eight years ago it would have been madness to have proposed that they could ever have sunk to

this depth. We no longer wondered that Madame Lubinoff wept while she laughed.

At the top of the stairs she pointed out a haggard fellow, attired in what was left of a uniform. He had been one of the smartest officers in the crack regiment of the Russian Guards. He had come to Warsaw a beggar. She had been puzzled by a familiar resemblance. Then she had remembered—she had been his partner, when things were in their heyday, at an Imperial Ball.

As we crossed the courtyard to the dining-room we were accosted—at every step we were accosted—by a bullet-headed old soldier who wore the highest military decoration that the Tsar could bestow. It was pinned against his greasy collar. He was General Rogovich. His request was humble. He was hungry; he would like to split kindling in exchange for food. “My General, it is very unfortunate,” our hostess told him, “but I have more than enough kindling split already.” He kissed her hand, submitting to her authority and yet, like an unwanted dog, he followed.

In a booth, at the entrance to the room where meals were served, the most brilliant comedy actor of the old Petrograd was collecting tickets. Inside wilted women of exalted nobility were pouring soup and piling dishes for a pittance as waitresses.

The curious point was that they no longer looked noble; they looked their part. The utensils were mostly make-shift; the cups were condensed-milk cans, with ragged metal edges which had been presented when empty by the American Relief Administration. At the tables sat a large part of what Mr. Gorlof, the Russian attaché, calls "the spiritual wealth of Russia." They were professors, musicians, actors, writers, financiers, doctors, engineers—the kind of people whose brain value never figures in a budget, but who constitute the realest asset of any nation. These were the few who were left from the great mass who had been tortured and shot.

At this point an old white-bearded man came up to us; he was General Prigorowsky, who had been one of the most brilliant of strategists when Russia was fighting on the side of the Allies. His face was intensely sad and his eyes were deep with unfathomable melancholy. At sixty years of age he was alone in the world, unloved, unprotected and almost unloveable. He had no idea what had become of his wife or children. For a time he and one son had been imprisoned together. Every day they had been led out and told they would be shot. One day only his son had been taken; after that he had remained alone in his cell. Having es-



caped, here he was, penniless in a foreign land which would rather be without him.

From the eating-room we were conducted to the kitchen. Again we were invited to shake hands with students, army officers and princesses. I had never realized that there were so many princesses in the world. In a miserable outhouse four women, who were professors' wives and resembled rag-pickers, huddled on a bench peeling beets into a basket.

We had climbed a stair and were pausing on a landing, when I happened to look out of the window. Shambling aimlessly round a wood-pile in the yard below was a forlorn little figure. He wore a dingy velvet hat—a girl's—made like a tam-o'-shanter, a girl's coat which trailed about his ankles, and boots which were a mere pretence. Upon enquiry I was informed that he was the Baron Hael Von Holdstein. His father had been a millionaire. His mother was the daughter of a Lord Mayor of Petrograd and was working in the soup-kitchen as a waitress. The little Baron, having nowhere else to go, came with her in the early morning and waited all day for her.

Beyond the door one heard the sound of sewing-machines revolving. We were admitted by a woman who had been the wife of the Tsar's coach-

man. Her husband had insisted on accompanying the Tsar into exile, so of course she was a widow. In closely packed rows, resembling a sweat-shop, women of all ages were stitching shirts. There were two princesses of the same family. One was the Princess Meschersky, who had been wife of the Consul General at Shanghai; the other was an orphan, a child of fifteen, who had recently escaped via Finland. Most of them have no homes and sleep beneath the machines where they work. In fact, Madame Lubinoff told me, the wretched building is as crowded by night as by day. Even the desk in her office is slept on.

"And now you have seen for yourselves," she laughed, "how all these people are dependent on me. And they are not lazy. They have forgotten that they were princes and have learnt to be cobblers, and carpenters, and tailors. If I had the means to start workshops, I already have the contracts. But I have not even the means to feed them. I simply dare not tell them. I shall have to run away."

"And shall you run away?" we asked.

Her eyes became defiant. "Never."

"Then where are the funds to come from?"

She paused. "From God, perhaps. Yes, I think from God."

## CHAPTER XV

### POLAND'S COMMON MAN

This morning I had an interview with Witos, the Prime Minister of Poland. If anyone suspects Poland of Imperialistic aims, Witos is the answer and the direct negation. He is a Galician peasant, who had his little farm near Cracow. He first began to be heard from as a protesting voice against oppression, when Galicia was under Austrian domination. As oppression multiplied his voice grew, always protesting in defence of the under-dog. It was five years ago, after Russian Poland had been occupied by Germany, that he became representative of the Polish nation and leapt to the stature of a life-sized patriot. Today he is the Abraham Lincoln of Poland, a man of the people whose integrity is unpurchaseable. But his integrity without sanity would be worthless; it is his shrewd common sense that is saving the situation. He has his knife out for nobody except rogues and robbers. If he ever had class hatred, he has forgotten it.

He chooses princes, Jews and common men as his advisors—people who were formerly intolerant of each other. His democratic simplicity leavens the lump. He values neither race, nor birth; the demands that he makes are intrinsic merit and enthusiasm for humanity.

He resides in the magnificent palace which belonged to the Civil Governor of Warsaw, when Warsaw was a part of Russian Poland. It was formerly the home of Madame Lubinoff, whose sacrifices to save the Russian refugees I have already described. A palace as the residence of a peasant Premier seems to mar the picture of his altruism; the unfavorable impression is corrected the moment you have seen the palace.

I don't know what they were doing with the lower part of it; it looked as if they were ploughing up the tessellated pavements and getting ready to plant potatoes. One rubbed shoulders with labourers and stumbled over mounds of earth in an endeavour to find an entrance. There were no armed guards. There were no military challenges—no gorgeous uniforms and flashing bayonets. Of whatever Witos may be afraid—and every man is afraid of something—it was evident that he has no dread of assassination.

At last we pushed open a narrow door where a

shabby porter relieved us of our hats. When we asked for directions, he jerked his thumb casually, indicating a marble staircase. Accepting his advice we found ourselves in a lofty chamber, stripped of all decoration and furniture. There we were met by a Government clerk, who ushered us into an empty ball-room and requested us to wait.

It was a palace, yes; but lacking in splendour. Nothing but the husk remained. In imagining the gay scenes that it had witnessed, the poms and pageants, the triumphs and envies, the vanished glitter of bombastic lavishness, one experienced the kind of pity a faded beauty inspires when her coquetry has been made dreadful by old age.

Would we come? The Government clerk was beckoning. As we followed him across the naked expanse of dance-floor there was something intimidating about those echoing vacancies. One thought of the women who had queened it there—the flash of their eyes, luring adoration, the glide of their dainty feet and the quick in-take of their breath. Where were they? Waiting their turn at Madame Lubinoff's soup-kitchen, mouldering in Bolshevik prisons or dead, which was happier.

In the smaller room which we entered a man, quite unremarkable at first sight, was seated at a desk. He was the kind of man that you may see by

the thousand anywhere from Ellis Island to San Francisco. His face was bony and lined from exposure. He was gone at the knees with overwork. His hands were disfigured with manual labour. He wore the high leather boots of a peasant. His suit was of a cheap shoddy material—tobacco coloured, the kind that shrinks and wrinkles in the rain and sun. In all outward aspects he was a common man—common in his voice, his gestures, his attire. His shirt was rough with a turn down collar; he wore no tie, so one saw the stud. He was the common man of Poland, guiding the nation's destinies. One remembered Lincoln's saying, that God must have loved the common people very much because He had made so many of them.

He left his desk and came towards us with a lagging step. With the exactness of simplicity and a curious glance of wonder, he shook our hands each in turn uncordially. Then he signed to us to seat ourselves at a round table.

The conversation which ensued, if it can be called a conversation, proceeded through an interpreter as Witos speaks only Polish. When he understood the nature of my errand, he requested that I would ask him questions, so I led off by asking him to assure me that Poland harboured no plans for territorial aggression. His eyes nar-

rowed; then he hid them, looking down at the table and rapping with his knuckles. If I would submit that question to him in writing, by tomorrow he would write me back an answer. Then I asked him my next question. What was the most constructive assistance that nations friendly to Poland could render? Again he would like me to write my question and give him time to write an answer in return.

His reply was the same to everything I asked. He was still the peasant at heart, wise, kindly, fully conscious of his disadvantages and a little distrustful of anyone who approached him professing benevolent friendliness. He was clever enough to know the limitations of his cleverness. He was cautious almost to the point of being unenterprising. He was so natively shrewd, that he would rather appear stupid than run the risk of being trapped. He would answer any question, yes. But he refused to be jockeyed into answering in a moment. Interpreters are unreliable and so are interviewers. When he spoke, he always spoke the truth. A lie was a thing abhorrent to him. He had arrived at his present position of trust not through brilliance, which is a comparatively frequent talent; but through courageous honesty,



which usually gets murdered before it has the chance to utter itself.

So I promised to write him my questions. But upon reflection I believe that that is unnecessary. What I wanted to obtain from him was an assurance that Poland wants peace within her borders and is not ambitious to grab territory. Witos answered me more emphatically by his truthfulness and his shrewdness than if he had swamped me with arguments and words. Such a man, so common, so honest, so representative of the workers who suffer, will be the last to lead his nation into rash, imperialistic adventures.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE NIGHT OF THE THREE KINGS

It was January the sixth, the eve of the Festival of the Three Kings, which is the day before the Russian Christmas, that we found ourselves automobiling across the devastated stretch of country which lies between Brest-Litovsk and the old Russo-German front-line. Our object in going was to see how the peasants were living in the destroyed areas and what was being done to save their starving children.

The mention of devastated areas conjures a picture of the kind of destruction that happened in France. But in Poland the problem of devastation is quite different. It is almost true to say that the whole of Poland is devastated. In France the destruction was intensely concentrated in a narrow belt of country where battles were fought. In Poland, with its tremendous distances, the depth of devastation is rarely less at any point than two hundred miles. If in the summer of 1920 a Polish soldier had started from Warsaw in the defence

against the Bolshevik invasion, had fought his way to Kiev, had fallen back in the retreat to Warsaw and, after the Polish victory, had again advanced to the present Polish front-line, he would have marched over a thousand miles in the space of four months.

We set out on a misty morning to cover the hundred and fifty kilometres which lie between the ruined city of Brest-Litovsk and the nearest town of Kovel. The road runs straight as a pencilled line across the sullen landscape. In all that stretch of country there is scarcely a sign of cultivation. The fields have become a wilderness, the rivers have overflowed and the whole is a barren swamp. The desolation was begun in 1915 when the Russians retreated before the Germans, driving the civilian population behind them, seizing the cattle and harrying with fire and with dynamite. They destroyed all the post-houses, which made communications possible, and blew up all the bridges. Then came the German occupation and the establishment of the Russo-German trench-systems forty kilometres to the east of Kovel. Whatever had been overlooked by the retreating Russians was picked clean by the advancing German armies. Until the Armistice this occupation lasted. When the Poles regained their freedom, the peasants who

had been refugees during all this period, began to come back. They had no sooner settled than the Bolsheviks' assaults commenced, sweeping clean across this same stretch of tillage to the very gates of Warsaw.

As you travel the bleak road between Brest-Litovsk and Kovel, every sight is eloquent of the misery that has been wrought. The route is marked by grave-yards and solitary crosses. Some are merely scratched on trees, the burial was so hurried. All surrounding is a brooding silence. One comes to clusters of houses, crouched beneath the weight of sky. Their roofs have collapsed; their walls are charred. Tenanted these ruins are gaunt human beings who hurry out of sight like pariahs. Sometimes we met them struggling along the road on purposeless journeys. They wore no shoes; their feet were swathed in sodden rags. They had a hunted look and gave us a wide berth as though they feared our cruelty. Many of the travellers were children, with gray faces and hunted eyes.

At Kovel we picked up our guide. She was one of the Gray Samaritans—an American citizen of Polish origin who hailed from Pittsburgh. Her name was Christine Zduleczna; she has been working in the most appalling parts of this unhappy

country for nearly two years. The Gray Samaritans are Polish-American girls, recruited by the Y. W. C. A. and at present attached to the American Relief Administration. All of them can talk the Polish language and most of them were old enough to remember the land of their birth at the time when they emigrated. Because of their dual nationality they are invaluable as a liaison between the need of the country and the American authorities. Their self-effacement is a sight to make more comfortable people blush. They practise the sacrifice of saints and the fearlessness of soldiers.

Kovel is a wretched hovel of a town, unsanitary, permanently splashed with mud, inhabited by Jews and White Russians. Nothing that Gorki or Tolstoi has described is more accursed and God-forsaken. Dirty, starveling shops, whose entire contents could be purchased for a dollar, stare out on a street which is a continuous puddle full of hidden holes and bumps. Droschkies, drawn by feeble ponies, move weakly through the squalor. No one seems to have anything to do. Men in mangy fur-coats, with sweeping beards and unspeakably filthy faces shuffle aimlessly along the pavements. Soldiers step by more briskly, but with an expression in their eyes of people who are condemned. It was here, outside a dingy stable,

facetiously named the Bellevue Hotel, that we met Christine Zduleczna. She looked trim and confident in her horizon-blue uniform—a triumph of courage over circumstance. Her spirit was as unbowed and eager as her appearance, as we were soon to discover. She was one of the girls who remained at their posts last summer, evacuating peasants till the Bolsheviks were almost within hailing distance. There was one girl on the Lithuanian Front who outstayed discretion and was captured.

Having taken Christine Zduleczna aboard, we ploughed our way out of the mud of Kovel and travelled due east towards the Front. The signs of war were becoming more recent and frequent. Freight-cars in the railroad yards flapped in ribbons, torn into shreds by shells. Engines lay on their sides, as full of holes as pepper boxes. Carcases of animals were strewn about. At one point there was a pile of bones, as high as a house, picked clean of flesh. Then the rusty red of barbed wire commenced and the dreary maze of abandoned trench-systems.

There was not a sign of human habitation, not a roof or a wall left standing; and yet people lived there. How? In the timbered dug-outs which the Germans had constructed; in old gun-emplacements; in shell-holes. They lived like foxes, any-

where and anyhow by burrowing underground. And what do they feed on? In many parts of the devastated areas they are eating grass as though they were cattle. They boil it into a kind of soup. Where they have no flour of any sort, they bake bread out of a mixture of bark and acorns. But our Gray Samaritan informed us that there was almost no ruined village that we had passed, where an American Children's Relief Station had not been established. She knew, for she had established them; that was her job. Whoever dies in Poland, the children will be saved as long as America recognises their necessity. But if America were to grow forgetful, most of them would be dead before another summer. The cruelty of the situation is that only the children can be fed; the parents, the grandparents and the boys and girls above the age of fourteen have to take their chance.

The melancholy of dusk was settling over this old battlefield, where for long years men had cursed and hated and butchered one another, when we drew up at our first point of call in the trench-dwellers' colony of Switniki.

Floundering in the mud and making a strong effort to keep our footing, we crossed a trench and approached a hut constructed out of the debris of the battlefield. Quarter sections of corrugated



iron, which the Germans had used for their gun-emplacements, had been riveted together, and the sides and top had been covered with sod. The place was in darkness when we knocked at the door. It was still in darkness when we were allowed to enter. Then, very sparingly, the only candle was lighted. It would be blown out the moment we departed. By its illumination we saw an old man and woman—they looked old, but they may not have been more than fifty. The woman's gray hair hung loose about her face; she was kneeling in a praying position in her bed. Perhaps it was the Three Kings she was expecting. This was the night when they were supposed to come, riding out of the East to leave their presents at the doors of the needy, just as twenty centuries ago they had tapped on the door of a stable in Bethlehem and found the Christ-Child in his poverty, asleep upon his mother's breast.

We gazed round the little room. It was speckless. All the rooms which we visited in this colony were. The people might be dying of starvation, but they were determined to die cleanly. That is the difference between your peasant and your city-dweller. One missed the abominable smells which accompany destitution in Warsaw. These people had the native gentleness of a race which has al-

ways been self-respecting, inventing their own music and poetry, and owning their little plot of land. They were not going to become disrespecting now.

Our host was a Pole—an exception to the community, most of whom were White Russians. He told his story simply. Before the war he had owned three acres, two cows and a team of horses. He had had a son who had gone to America and had been in the habit of sending him money. When the Russian armies were driven out of Poland by the Germans, he had been forced to move back into Russia. His farm had been cut up into trenches, as we could see for ourselves. After the Armistice he had returned to find a rubbish-heap, full of foulness. He had set to work with the little money he had to buy a horse and implements; then last summer had come the Bolshevist invasion, eating up everything like a plague of locusts. Now he had nothing. One could not fill in trenches and level a land blown about by shells without implements, merely with one's naked hands. And worst of all, during his long exile, he had lost touch with his son in America. Probably the son thought him dead. If he could only discover his son's address, everything might yet be well. So perhaps it wasn't for the Three Kings that the old

mother had been listening so intently, when she had heard our footsteps in the mud and our sudden tap. As I had expected, the moment we departed the candle was blown out.

We came to another hut. This time they were White Russians. Outside the door the Soltys, or head-man of the village, joined us. Inside we found a family of seven children and a mother who was a widow. Her husband had died of typhus, but it was more true to call it starvation, she said. Here they had no candles, so they lit shavings of wood. Again, in spite of the poverty, everything was proudly speckless. An oven of baked mud had been built in one corner and the top of it afforded two of the children with a bed. And what pretty children they were, from the baby to the eldest who was a girl of seventeen! The walls were decorated with branches of spruce in case the Three Kings should come.

The story was the same as the last. They had been prosperous, owning their little farm and earning extra in the summer by hiring themselves to the big estates. Then the German invasion had driven them into exile and on their return they had found the industry of centuries blotted out. How did they live, we asked. The American kitchen took care of the children. All the children in the

village would have died the Soltys said, if the Americans had not come to their rescue. In this particular family the girl of seventeen and a son of fifteen were the main supports. The boy was not present; he slept with the pony—their only possession—to prevent its being stolen. The boy and girl travelled the country in the spring and summer, hiring themselves and taking flour in payment. Very often they were cheated by the farmers, who after weeks of work would turn them adrift with nothing. And then, of course, there was the trouble of bringing the flour back—a hundred miles sometimes, from far outside the devastated areas—carrying it. They spoke uncomplainingly, merely stating facts. The girl of seventeen, who took these risks and journeys, kept smiling and nodding her confirmation. The children peeped at us from behind the mud furnace like startled rabbits.

The last family that we visited had been rich by peasant standards. They had owned forty acres, three teams of horses, six cows, many pigs and geese and hens. All that they had found on their return from exile was forty acres of polluted mud. The household consisted of a grandfather, with a white beard and a shock of black curly hair. He had the eye of a hawk and the face of an in-

tellectual. There was his wife, the grandmother, a lean woman with a humorous mouth and eyes which held you at bay with a veiled defiance. There was their daughter, a widow, very little and meek. And then there were her four children.

"You must not judge us as you see us now," the old man said. "You should have seen us once with all our cattle. Should I live as I do, if I could help it?"

The furnace threw out a ruddy glow. On the hot stones four little cakes were baking, which the four little boys regarded with popping eyes. "They are the cakes of the Three Kings," the grandmother explained; "they are filled with poppy-seeds. I travelled a long way to get the flour, and I worked and worked. And then I was afraid that I would be robbed on the lonely roads before ever I got it back."

We asked them what they usually ate. Oh, anything and often nothing. Did they ever bake any of this acorn bread? They wished they could, but they hadn't any acorns.

And so through the night of the festival of the Three Kings we drove back across the desolate battlefields. At Kovel we said good-bye to Christine Zduleczna. We left her in her mouldy room, in the dingy den of the Bellevue, which looks more

like a thieves' kitchen than a hotel. She parted with us with a cheery smile—she loved her people and her work. If she had her choice, while the need was so great, she wouldn't be anywhere else. But I, for one, felt a coward in leaving her alone to carry such a burden.

We struck the bleak, interminable road which leads through Brest-Litovsk to civilisation. Our lamps as we parted the wall of darkness, picked out the crosses of silver birch, the black and white verst poles, the graveyards and the humpy ruined houses. They revealed them to us one by one, beckoning them out of oblivion, making each tragedy seem separate and the more significant. It was bitterly cold. We huddled closer and shivered in our rugs and furs. Sometimes we dozed in a nodding fashion. But whenever we roused, like figures of grief on a frieze of blackness, we saw the straggling forms of outcast travellers, their feet swathed in rags, journeying in search of bread. Very often they were boys and girls, above the age of fourteen whom so far the American Relief has not had sufficient funds to rescue. They were journeying in quest of bread on the night, when according to tradition, the Three Kings should have been riding from the East to bring them help.

## CHAPTER XVII

### DOES POLAND WANT PEACE?

Does Poland want peace? It is a question which has to be answered in the affirmative if either philanthropists or nations are going to interest themselves in restoring Poland to a sound financial footing. In order to obtain an authoritative answer, I approached Prince Sapieha, the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs. Rather to my amazement he was not at all elusive, but gave me the most convincing arguments for Poland's peace desires that I have yet heard.

"The trouble with Poland," he said, "is that she lies between Russia and Germany. That is not her fault; it is the way it happens. Our nation is in a place where it is not wanted; but you may take it from me that we are not going to get out. Germany has an over-population which increases every year by leaps and bounds. It was her over-population that produced the war; she wanted England's colonies and more European territory.



She simply had to have room to expand. The Allies have confiscated her merchant marine, broken her military strength and taken away even the colonies that she already had. But they have not taken away her enormous birth-rate, so the problem of what to do with her surplus population is more pressing than ever. Her only possible direction for expansion is eastwards into Russia, which would probably be for Russia's benefit. Unfortunately we stand in the way; anything that would destroy us is to her advantage. It is not to her interest that we should have peace; therefore she tries to lower our prestige and depress our exchange by spreading the rumour that we have imperialistic ambitions. If she can get Upper Silesia to believe this, the vote of the plebiscite will go against us and she will acquire some of the richest coal-fields in Europe.

"As regards Russia, the problem is historic rather than economic. Before the partitioning of Poland much that is now Russian was Polish. Two hundred years have gone by and today the racial claims are about equally divided. We have acknowledged this fact at Riga, where peace with the Bolsheviks is nearly concluded. We have divided the debatable territory into two halves as fairly as we know how. If the Bolsheviks de-

sire peace, we shall give them no reason for altering their minds. And they should mean it, if internal conditions count for anything, for they are exhausted and their armies, though greater than ours in number, are far inferior in fighting qualities. I can assure you with absolute sincerity that we are losing no chance of arranging trade treaties and making all the neighbours along our borders our friends. We hope and believe that they are as sick of bloodshed as we are.

“But merely to remove the provocations that led to bloodshed will not bring peace. Poland can have no peace till she has regained prosperity and her people have ceased to starve. What I want to say to the world is that there is no reason why we should starve; we have everything within our frontiers that could make us a rich nation. Before the war Poland, partitioned as she was, was self-supporting. And don't let anyone think that we are starving because we like it. Seventy per cent. of our cattle have been carried off by the Russian, German, Austrian and Bolshevist invasions. The machinery in our factories has been demolished or looted. Our agricultural implements have been stolen or destroyed. I think of the Polish People as the landowner of a valuable estate without the capital to work it. What does

the landowner do? He keeps on pawning this and that and, in sheer desperation, gambles with the results. No big financier will lend money to a gambler. But suppose the landowner gives such proofs that he has ceased to gamble that the financier will let him have a mortgage. He starts to work and buys implements; in a few years his estate pays sufficiently to redeem the mortgage. It is clear of debt and the landowner becomes happy.

“We had to fight to defend ourselves, still I can understand that we may have been regarded as gamblers. We have had wars on five fronts. On four of them we have peace already; the fifth peace is being concluded. We are trying to prove in every way that our only desire is to get to work. But it is physically impossible to accomplish that without outside help.

“There are four things that we require if life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are to be ours. First, we need the belief of the world in our sincerity, when we say that we do want peace. Second, we need credits of food-stuffs to regenerate our workers’ debilitated bodies. Third, we need food-stuffs in sufficient quantities to accomplish this purpose. From the statesmanly point of view mere doles are of no good to us. We need

to have enough to eat for at least six months; after that we shall be strong to produce for ourselves. After that you will hear no more of Poland going Bolshevik. Bolshevism is the last hope of the man with the empty stomach. And lastly, we need financial assistance to repair our damaged machinery and to make our industries buzz. We want experts to come to Poland to look over our investment opportunities. The opportunities are here and our people are willing. We want to buzz and to pull our weight in the world."

"Your Excellency," I said, "as regards Poland's desire for peace you have convinced me. But do the Bolsheviks intend to let you have peace, despite their conferences at Riga? Everybody's talking of a drive in the spring which is intended to wipe Poland off the map."

He stood for a minute silent. He seemed to be searching for a more clenching argument, which had escaped his memory. Then he smiled gravely and held out his hand. "I have an estate beyond Grodno," he said. "It is directly in the line of a Bolshevik attack. Three separate invasions have picked it bare. There's scarcely anything but the land left. At the present moment I am rebuilding it, putting in implements and re-stock-

ing it with cattle. As a man in the know, a Minister of Foreign Affairs, should I do that if I had the least doubt that our peace with Bolshevism would prove lasting?"

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE PROBLEM OF DANTZIG

Dantzic's problem is similar to the problems of the whole of Central Europe; it arises out of the arbitrary creation of new frontiers. To sit in Paris with a blue pencil and scrawl lines on a map was a simple task; to have to dwell within those lines, despite their violation of economic laws, and make a livelihood, has proved less easy. It is one thing to declare Dantzic a free-port; it is another to persuade her neighbours to use her. It is possible that in making Dantzic free, the Peace Conference has only made her free to starve.

Here is the situation. Dantzic, as she is today, consists of seven hundred and fifty square miles of territory, and a population of 350,000 souls. Her former industries were shipping, ship-building and the manufacture of armaments. For the latter purposes, while the war was on, the Germans imported thousands of workmen, many of whom still

remain. The manufacture of armaments is now forbidden. There is no demand for ship-building. Ocean-going traffic is at a halt; the nations in whose interests the free-port was constituted are either bankrupt or anxious to develop their own harbours. Poland, who was expected to be her largest employer, is too busy with the Bolsheviks to be a producer; hence she has nothing to ship. When she does begin to produce, it is on the boards that she may avoid Dantzig. She acquired a distaste for free-ports last summer when the Dantzig longshoremen refused to unload her munitions. She is already flirting with two alternatives. Germany is coaxing her to adopt Stettin as her outlet; she herself is inclined to build docks of her own on the seaboard of the Polish Corridor.

Meanwhile Dantzig is idle. She has no industries to keep her going. Her agriculture is too limited to support her population. Her neighbours cannot send her food-stuffs; their own needs are too pressing. If times were normal, Poland might be willing to feed her; but Poland herself is only being kept alive by the relief brought in from America. When the free-port was created, a clause was inserted in the Peace Treaty, obliging Poland to act as Dantzig's larder. One of the demands was that Poland should provide the free-port with



five hundred tons of flour weekly at a stipulated price. The price named was so insufficient that the flour sent to Dantzig costs Poland twice as much, not reckoning the unloading, as the price which Dantzig pays for it. All of it has to be imported from America.

In 1914 the daily consumption of milk in Dantzig was 50,000 litres, most of which was Polish. Today the maximum she is able to obtain is 10,000 litres and the minimum 4,000. As a consequence babies are the sufferers. I visited ward after ward filled with tiny mites made hideous with rickets. The hospital was so overcrowded and diminished in its resources that it possessed no change of linen. While the rags are washed the little patients go naked. What this means in the sanitary conditions of a babies' hospital can be best imagined. You may see children of six months who have not gained beyond their birth-weight. In Vienna, where similar conditions prevail, I saw a four year old child who weighed only nineteen pounds.

It is the children, always the children who are the victims, no matter in which country you investigate. When we fought, we believed that it was we who paid the price; but the bill of pain which we settled in the trenches is as nothing to

the account which is being rendered to the younger generation. Of the Dantzig children below the age of fifteen who have been medically examined, more than half are under-nourished and of this half only a third are being cared for by the joint efforts of the American Children's Relief and the Society of Friends. Here are the exact figures. One quarter of the children examined is normal. One quarter is badly under-nourished. And one half is sufficiently below the standard to warrant extra feeding. An important fact of the situation is that the majority of the starving children belong to the middle-classes. During the war and until recently the workmen have received special rations to induce them to labour. In addition to this their wages have followed the rise in costs, whereas the salaries of clerks, officials and professional people have been comparatively stationary. The middle-classes are not unionized, so they cannot attract attention to their grievances by strikers' methods.

Dantzig's future is distinctly gloomy. Germany has her own Baltic ports to encourage. Poland is her sole hope of prosperity and Poland is in bitter want herself. Moreover, if Poland recovers, which may take years, she may prefer to construct her own harbour—that is to say, if she does not yield to the inducements held out by Stettin.

The muddle is economic and racial. But such a statement leads to no solution. The fact remains that before she was commanded to be nobody's property her harbours were thriving. Today, as far as one can see, all that her freedom means is that her harbours are free to stand empty and her children are at liberty to die of hunger. No doubt the gentleman in Paris with the blue pencil had the handsomest of intentions, but he collided head-on with economic forces which it was his business to have apprehended. Whoever he was, he has made good his escape, while the children, as usual, pay the penalty.

## CHAPTER XIX

### YOUNG GERMANY

The youth of Germany have established an invisible system of trenches in every home, every school, every university. Though they may not know it and would perhaps disown it, they are banded together to withstand that same intolerance of autocracy which hurried lovers of freedom from the ends of the earth that it might be crushed on the Western Front.

These new armies which are re-winning the old battle have given themselves a name; they call themselves the *Freie Deutsche Jugend*—the Free Youth of Germany. Their ranks are made up of girls as well as boys. In isolated instances they are organised, but for the most part they are knights-errant. I asked a young man today how he had been elected to the companionship. He looked troubled, not grasping my meaning. After further explanation he smiled. He had elected himself. That was the way it was done. One felt

in his heart that he ought to be free. He talked with some friends. Then he joined the movement.

The Free Youth of Germany range in age from mere children to University students. They are against tyranny in every form, against meaningless conventions, against conscription, against war, against inherited hates, against all traditions and institutions which hamper and curtail their self-expression and capacity for self-development. If you ask them to formulate their doctrine, they grow vague. Each one answers in terms of his or her personal idealism and disillusionment. They want to be happy—that is what it amounts to and they have never been happy. They are determined to be happy at all costs. The world of grown people has proved itself cruel. They will have nothing to do with it. They refuse to accept its authority. They will build society afresh. They make these confessions with a haughtiness which is as ridiculous as it is pathetic. Because you are older, they address you as an enemy. For fear you should laugh, they over-emphasize and grow visionary and grandiloquent. From time immemorial, they tell you, the youth of all countries has been hectored and abused; they are going to harness the youth of every race in a titanic effort to correct the injustice of human affairs.

Humanitarians at the duckling stage, a cynic might call them, and then add as his verdict, "They'll grow out of that." God forbid that they should; their attempt to break chains is the most hopeful sign in Central Europe. Consider the experience of life they have had. Those of them who are old enough can remember pre-war Germany, with its harsh demands of unquestioning obedience. The military idea permeated everything. Force was the argument that was most respected—force in the home, the school, the university. A child was drilled from the cradle to the grave. As with a private in the army, it was a crime to answer back. His business was not to think, but to obey. Fear of punishment was the spur of all his endeavours. He was gorged with knowledge that he might prove efficient. Life was a battle, which called for efficiency rather than kindness. A home was a miniature headquarters mess in which the father was the general and the mother his adjutant.

Then came the assault upon civilisation, to which all these sacrifices of liberty had been the preface. The children of Germany were still further despoiled. Their formative years were embittered in an atmosphere of harrowing uncertainties. Every day was irritable with dreads and gray with

unrelieved privations. There was never an hour from which the knowledge of horror was absent. The Armistice for a moment seemed to promise freedom, but the peace terms sentenced them to a life-time of servitude. Can you wonder that they refuse to be associated with the unwisdom of their elders? They have seized on the dream of a new generosity. They believe that in the eyes of all youth there are visions. They will appeal over the heads of adults to the youth of the nations for friendship. "We children were never enemies," they say. "We did not make the war. We were the victims of it. We were not consulted." They insist, with impotent passion, that the fathers' sins shall not be visited upon their generation. "We want to be young," they plead. "We have never been young. We have only been little."

"Poor kiddies!" is one's first comment. But their demands are not to be dismissed so cavalierly. The Free Youth have already commenced a revolution—it is a revolution of ideas—ideas in the main which have not become articulate. But these child enthusiasts will be men and women soon. They will have to be heard. No one can foresee to what lengths their yearning for freedom may carry them. It should be the business of the Allies to show them sympathy and give them direction.



There are three points in their movement which deserve to be made emphatic. The first is that they are absolutely correct in their assertion that the children of the Allies were never at war with the children of Germany. The second is that the Free Youth of Germany are fighting for precisely the same ideals for which the Allies fought, and are doing their fighting on German soil where it will be most effective. The third is that they are showing a spirit of regeneration which, if it is encouraged, will become the national spirit of tomorrow. For the safety of the world, if for no less selfish reason, their movement deserves the Allies' consideration. A part of their ideal has already found expression in the new German Constitution, which was passed two months after the signing of the Peace Treaty. The clause is number 148 and reads, "Our schools must educate our children not only in a spirit of patriotism, but also in a spirit of international reconciliation." As Dr. Simon, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, said when he pointed it out to me, "That wasn't so bad as a beginning when only two months had elapsed since our humiliation at Versailles."

All the American and British relief work done in Germany is being concentrated on the youth. For the American Relief the Society of Friends

are the dispensers. The work starts constructively with the unborn. Feeding stations have been established at which under-nourished expectant mothers attend daily. The main reasons for their under-nourishment are the scarcity of work and, before that, the blockade. One of them told me that her husband had had nothing to do for six months. How did they live? On their unemployment pay. But hadn't her husband been in the war and didn't he receive a pension? Yes. He had been in the war for four years. But he received no pension, for, alas, he had not been badly wounded.

At the present moment 600,000 children are being fed at American Relief Stations, which the Friends are operating; but there are at least 400,000 more who ought to be included. Whether they are included depends on what funds are forthcoming within the next few months.

The schemes for saving the youth of Germany are exceedingly thorough. Starting with the unborn child, they finish with the student at the University. By far the larger part of the funds for the student feeding are contributed by Great Britain. They are administered by a personnel made up of the British and American Society of Friends.

The thirst for learning since the close of the

war has become abnormal. Students attending the universities are one-third in excess of the capacity. They are young men and women drawn from every class and welded together by an almost painful enthusiasm for democracy. The sacrifices which they make to gain an education sometimes reach the point of martyrdom. One girl, who is by no means exceptional, attends her lectures by day and scrubs floors as a charwoman by night. If it were not for the one substantial meal in the twenty-four hours which the Friends provide, she would collapse. It is to such people that the American and British Friends are ministering. They realise that, if there is ever to be peace between the sons and daughters of the nations who fought, the peace must commence in the heart.

Very naturally while middle-aged Germany is caviling over reparations and eluding engagements, the charitably disposed publics of the Allies are unwilling to respond to appeals for help. Their old war hatreds have no sooner shown signs of subsiding than some new cause is given by Berlin for suspicion and offence. In spite of this, the point which cannot be made too emphatic is that it is middle-aged Germany, the contriver of the war, which is creating these offences. Young Germany is no party to them. It is just that a

distinction should be made between the new and the old. The new is fighting our battle for us. In the universities it is fighting the professors who insist on teaching reactionary doctrines. The students being young, are sick and tired of the glorification of the old, bad past. They insist on starting with today and looking forward. If we desire it, we can have them for our friends.

Not to desire it would be a crime which is unpardonable. We fought a war which we said was to be the last; if through our lack of generous response we fling the youth of Germany back into the arms of the reactionaries, we are preparing a future war. Quite apart from decency and humanity, it is statesmanly and economic to hold out hopes of magnanimity. If we hoard food-stuffs today and insist on a policy of revenge, we shall be expending tomorrow on shells a thousand times the money we have saved. The rejected idealist is the least forgiving antagonist and the Free Youth of Germany are a volcano of idealism. They deserve our sympathy. They sincerely want to be our friends. They have rejected their own elders and look to us for guidance. They are young birds who have been wounded. They have never spread their wings. In listening to their talk, all the time one has the picture of fledglings trying

to lift themselves from the ground. To destroy a bad world was necessary; but to help build a good one is braver. As far as young Germany is concerned, the hour is ripe for relenting. If we allow it to escape us, it will not be ourselves, but our children who will have to bear the consequences.

## CHAPTER XX

### NEITHER PEACE NOR WAR

The words are Trotsky's. They were his verdict on the humiliating Peace which Russia was compelled to accept at the hands of Germany. You may see them scrawled on the wall of the old Jesuit College at Brest-Litovsk where the Peace was signed: "Neither Peace Nor War. Trotsky." If they were true of the Peace of Brest-Litovsk, they are equally true of the Peace which has befallen Central Europe as the crowning achievement of the war which was to end all wars. It is not stating matters too strongly to say that up to date Peace had caused at least as much misery as the four years' fury of embattled armies. But there is this difference: the heavier portion of the present misery is being borne by women and children.

As one who was a combatant, I think I know what urged the fighting-man to his sacrifice. He considered his own welfare as of paltry consequence if, by foregoing it, he could help to create

a social order which would be more righteous. He gladly took his chance of wounds and annihilation, believing that his pain was the purchase-price of a future and enduring happiness. A tour through contemporary Central Europe would leave him sadly disillusionized. The victory, which his idealism made possible, has been turned to a cruel use—a use which he never intended and for which he would certainly never have agonised. Killing men in fight is comparatively decent and an essential accompaniment of the technique of war; butchering their families with slow starvation by the Peace that comes after is revolting and savage.

And whose is the fault? Part of it belongs to the enemy nations themselves who perpetrated the crime of war and, when they found that they were losing, fought themselves to such a point of exhaustion that they were left with no power of recuperation. Part of it belongs to the internal race-hatreds which were only kept in check by the economic interdependence of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. Part of it belongs to a Peace of Idealism imposed upon peoples historically unprepared for it and imposed at a time when they found themselves on the brink of insolvency. The only chance that such a Peace had of achieving the pacification that was intended, was by the Allies



taking control of Central Europe and constituting themselves sole arbiters of administration until the newly created nations were sufficiently balanced to function for themselves. But in the final analysis the fault was yours and mine—we who are the plain people of the Allied Nations.

It is more fashionable to lay the blame on a group of elderly statesmen who met in Paris to arrange the pacification. They were the leaders who had piloted their nations to triumph—men of unstained integrity who, having survived incredible anxieties, had the right to be more war-jaded than any of their countrymen. They met at a time when the nerves of both conquerors and defeated had reached the breaking-point. They had no sooner assembled than the clamour arose, "Make haste. Make haste." Overnight they were compelled to attempt solutions for race-problems which had eluded astuter minds than theirs for centuries. They were forced to decide the fates of nations whose language they could not speak, whose lands they had not visited, whose geography was unfamiliar to them and whose very histories they were not given time to study. They were not permitted to consecrate to peace a hundredth part of the industry that victory had required. As a consequence, in order to abbreviate debates, they

cleared the room of critics and carved up the map of Europe behind closed doors. They were good men, animated by a desire to help humanity. Civilisation was crumbling while they delayed. The loud boom of threatened ruin thundered through their council-chamber like the cracking of Arctic ice.

It was not their reparation clauses that did the damage. The reparation clauses were just. The least you can ask of a boy who flings a stone is that he shall replace the pane which he smashed. The damage was done by clauses conceived in the finest spirit of altruism, but with no practical knowledge of what was possible. You may pitch your ideals so high that you render them useless. The weakness of the Peace Treaty lay in the fact that its framers had to rely on books and hearsay for information which, to be accurate, ought to have been obtained by first-hand investigation. And they were not business men. They were journalists, professors and oratorical inspirers; whereas their task from first to last was a re-organizing of the world's big business. When the doors were flung wide on their deliberations, they presented humanity with exactly what we might have expected—a paper peace. It was a noble performance for the time it had taken. It read

beautifully, but in practice large portions of it have proved wholly unworkable and have produced an economic stagnation which is neither peace nor war. It is fair to state, however, that whether because of or in spite of it, Europe has shown a marked improvement in the last two years.

Recriminations are cowardly. The mistakes of the Peace Treaty were the direct result of our culpable indifference. We displayed little interest in what our pacifiers were doing. World-happenings no longer concerned us. Few of us troubled to read the terms when they were published. We had become provincial and were concentrating all our energies on our personal futures. Things being as they were, it is probable that no group of men, differently selected, could have done better. In the spring of 1919 we were not ripe for peace. Most decidedly we were not ripe for altruism. We were spendthrift philanthropists in dread of our creditors. We were too panic-stricken to be considerate, too needy to be magnanimous, too unfortunate to have pity on the unhappiness of the peoples who had caused our embarrassment. If the elderly statesmen made too much haste in Paris, it was we who urged them to hurry. The paper peace was the common people's doing quite as much as it was theirs. By the same token the

starvation of five million children in Central Europe is our doing. And the righting of the disaster which our indifference made possible, should be ours.

What do the peoples whom our Peace has tortured, have to say about it? Their criticism is summed up in one word—hypocrisy. They say that we employed the language of the Beatitudes, while we cast lots for their raiment. They say—though certainly they exaggerate—that they would not have minded so much if we had been boldly ruthless; what they can't forgive is our high-flown talk of democracy and justice at the very moment when we were condemning them to generations of servitude. They accuse us of having paid our debts out of their pockets in a manner which had nothing to do with reparations. A case in point was the reward that was allotted to Roumania for having come in on the side of the Allies. The Russian Front was crumbling. For the Allies it was the blackest hour. Something had to be done to create a diversion; if the diversion had not been created, we might have been in the condition that Central Europe is in today. Roumania offered to join us if, in the event of victory, we would concede to her certain territories. As Admiral Horthy, the Governor of what is left of Hungary,

said to me, "Your very lives were at stake. You would have promised Roumania the whole of Hungary at that moment if she had asked for it. I, for one, would not have blamed you. What I blame is not that you kept your promise after you had won the war, but that you stole from us in the name of idealism, disguising your theft with a lot of talk about self-determination. You paid your debt by handing over Transylvania, which was Hungary's granary and absolutely essential to our economic regeneration. We are a trunk of a nation now, shorn of our arms and legs. We cannot rise from the ground or stir. You have spared us our head, so we lie on our back and think, and die by inches."

What is it that the Peace has really done to Europe? It has created a dozen Alsace-Lorraines by taking away territory from one people and bestowing it on another. It has manufactured new nations, with new paper currencies, negligible reserves, experimental constitutions and no previous experience to guide them in the restraints of self-government. It has multiplied frontiers and spun a spider-web of tariff-walls. It has fenced in the local hatreds which it was intended to abolish, so that they grow savage like dogs perpetually chained. It has established free-ports for the use

of mixed populations who are too distrustful to use them. It has entrusted to plebiscites the deciding of their own fates, with the result that they have become hot-beds for the hostile propaganda of rival claimants. It has so lopped and changed the political landscape that railroads now converge on cities which have ceased to serve their purpose. Vienna, the great pre-war middle-man city of Central Europe, is a case in point. Today it stands isolated and unself-supporting in the scrubby patch of tillage which is the new Austria. Its currency is so unredeemable and varying in value that even Austrians prefer to make their contracts in terms of a foreign currency which is stable. Their neighbours refuse to accept it and hoard their goods within their own borders. Their goods have a tangible value, which the paper money of Austria has not. But the railroads still converge on Vienna. The case is similar throughout partitioned Europe. Money is a commodity in which to speculate; it is no longer a medium of barter. When you cross the border from Czecho-Slovakia into Poland, you have to pay your train-fare in French francs. Polish marks are refused, although you are already on Polish soil. When nations show this distrust of their own issue, they can scarcely expect other nations to accept it. At all the fron-



tiers you are searched by officials of the country from which you are departing, to make sure that you are not carrying away too much of their worthless currency. If you are, it is confiscated. The amount that you are allowed to carry is utterly inadequate. It is impossible to travel unless you are a person of sufficient standing to purchase a letter of credit. As a consequence of these restrictions, trade has ceased to circulate and raw materials, which would mean life if trade-confidence were restored, lie hoarded in idle accumulations.

Which brings one to the question of transportation, which lies at the heart of the mischief. So great is the bitterness occasioned by the transfer of territories, with the multiplying of frontiers and hostile tariff-walls, that every nation is at enmity with its neighbours and determined at all costs not to co-operate. One irritating way in which they show their venom is by refusing to return freight-cars which come across their frontiers. Very naturally no freight-cars come across. Goods which are being exported, are unloaded at the border and then re-loaded into cars of the country through which they are to travel. The belief in honesty has perished; the carving up of Europe is largely to blame for it.

And what is the solution? The nations who have



been most despoiled say, "War." They have neither peace nor war at present; war would give them the chance to snatch back some of the territory that has been filched from them. The disaster of a neighbour might prove to be their opportunity. If they missed their chance, they could not be worse off. They are starving by inches. I never believed that it was possible for so many people to be so hungry and still to go on living. After a certain point of agony has been reached, when the majority of the population possesses nothing, Bolshevism with all its brutal crudities will be welcome. Bolshevism practises at least one principle of social justice: in crises of destitution it sweeps aside property rights and insists that the citizens who have shall share. Day by day, as the tide of hunger rises, sane thinking is being overwhelmed. The goal towards which Central Europe is driving is undoubtedly Bolshevism.

But there *is* another solution, besides war and Bolshevism, which has not yet been tested—peace. Not the "near" peace and the paper peace of Paris; but the practical peace, tempered with magnanimity, which was the peace we were promised when we fought, and the only peace that any decent man intended.

As a preface to such a peace it is necessary to

prevent people from starving. The American Relief Administration is trying to keep pace with the strides of famine. The British Save the Children Fund, is concentrating on Austria. The American and British Society of Friends are operating in Germany. Many of the neutral countries are doing something. We are all doing something and none of us are doing enough. For the moment all of us are trying to save children because, whoever else was guilty, they at least were innocent of offence. The effort is finely conceived and statesmanly; children whose lives you have rescued will always be your friends. It is one way of wiping out animosities. Whatever happens to the League of Nations you are making sure of a League of Grateful Children. But there is something cruel in leaving their parents to die of hunger. None of us who has a surplus, whatever his nationality, should be able to rest easy in his bed, till the nations who starve have been nourished.

The first essential of peace is that Central Europe should be supplied with food-stuffs. The second is that she should be allowed credits, so that her currencies may be restored to an actual value. The third is that her flow of transportation should be assured. The fourth is that she should be compelled to break down her internal tariff-walls which

we, through our short-sightedness, enabled her to set up.

The answer to this is that no government will be prepared to allow credits to a Central Europe which acts spitefully among its component members and so adds daily to its own tribulations. But as regards the spitefulness, if we condemn it too much, we become like Pontius Pilate washing his hands. The spitefulness existed racially before the war and helped to bring the war about; but we, the Allies, are responsible for its most recent and intense development. Our Peace partitioned economic entities, which had proved workable, and substituted in their place a series of political experiments. These experiments, when imposed upon social and financial conditions which were already shaky, instead of restoring equilibrium, precipitated insolvency. It was as though in trying to rescue a boat-load of shipwrecked mariners, we had collided and, instead of accomplishing the good we had intended, had flung them all into the water. Their instinct for self-preservation comes uppermost. They drown one another as they struggle for a hold on the upturned boat. It was our clumsiness that upset them, so we are scarcely in a position to condemn. If we had wanted to impose our peace experiments, there was only one

safe way in which to do it. We should have taken control of partitioned Europe and made ourselves responsible for its new countries, till they were sufficiently stabilised to function for themselves.

Their dire necessity has again given us this opportunity. They must be fed and set to work; if not, the anarchy and distress which are now confined within their borders, will spread like a disease throughout the world. There is no time to lose. It is no longer a case of philanthropy; it is a case of safeguarding our own social health. In return for food-stuffs and credits we must make our conditions; the conditions are that we must be allowed to take control of the entire internal economy of our creditors. There should be no food-stuffs or credits for any country which will not permit the Allies' Director to administer their railroads. The Allies' Director should be in every case an American, since America alone is above suspicion in Europe and has no political axe to grind. The Director in each country would be absolute in the matter of distribution and transport, and would see to it that out-going freight-cars were not unloaded at his frontier and that freight-cars which had entered his territory were returned.

Central Europe at the moment is insane with hunger. She is capable of any folly. She is

scarcely to be held accountable for her actions. If she is not fed, revolution will spring up in every direction and no one can say where it will end. Every month we delay brings the menace nearer. The Atlantic Ocean will prove to be no barrier.

She wants the peace which we promised and have withheld. If we withhold it much longer, she will be forced to accept the other alternative. There are only two roads which she can travel; the road of peace or of war. The road of war means Bolshevism. Our settlement at Paris has decided nothing. She has neither peace nor war at present.

THE END





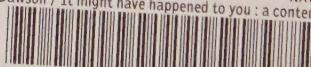


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